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IN THE MIST.

BY BOYD CABLE.

WHEN the Lieutenant turned out of his dug-out in the very small hours, he found with satisfaction that a thin mist was hanging over the ground.

'Can't see much,' he said half an hour later, peering out from the front trench. 'But so much the better. Means they won't be so likely to see us. So long, old man. Come along, Studd.'

The other officer watched the two crawl out and vanish into the misty darkness. At intervals a flare light leaped upward from one side or the other, but it revealed nothing of the ground, showed only a dim white radiance in the mist and vanished. Rifles crackled spasmodically up and down the unseen line, and very occasionally a gun boomed a smothered report and a shell *swooshed* over. But, on the whole, the night was quiet, or might be called so by comparison with other nights, and the quietness lent colour to the belief that the Hun was quietly evacuating his badly battered front line. It was to discover what truth was in the report that the Lieutenant had crawled out with one man to get as near as possible to the enemy trench—or, still better, into or over it.

Fifty yards out the two ran into one of their own listening posts, and the Lieutenant halted a moment and held a whispered talk with the N.C.O. there. It was all quiet in front, he was told, no sound of movement and only a rifle shot or a light thrown at long intervals.

'Might mean anything, or nothing,' thought the Lieutenant. 'Either a trench full of Boche taking a chance to sleep, or a trench empty except for a "caretaker" to shoot or chuck up an odd light.'

He whispered as much to his companion and both moved carefully on. The ground was riddled with shell-holes and was soaking wet, and very soon the two were saturated and caked with sticky

mud. Skirting the holes and twisting about between them was confusing to any sense of direction, but the two had been well picked for this special work and held fairly straight on their way. No light had shown for a good many minutes, and the Lieutenant fancied that the mist was thickening. He halted and waited a minute, straining his eyes into the mist and his ears to catch any sound. There was nothing apparently to see or hear, and he rose to his knees and moved carefully forward again. As he did so a flare leaped upward with a long hiss and a burst of light glowed out. It faintly illumined the ground and the black shadows of shell-holes about them, and—the Lieutenant with a jump at his heart stilled and stiffened—not six feet away and straight in front, the figure of a man in a long grey coat, his head craned forward and resting on his arms crossed in front of him and twisted in an attitude of listening. Studd, crawling at the Lieutenant's heels, saw at the same moment, as was told by his hand gripped and pressing a warning on the Lieutenant's leg. The light died out, and with infinite caution the Lieutenant slid back level with Studd and, motioning him to follow, lay flat and hitched himself a foot at a time towards the right to circle round the recumbent German. The man had not been facing full on to them, but lay stretched and looking toward their left, and by a careful circling right the Lieutenant calculated he would clear and creep behind him. A big shell-crater lay in their path, and after a moment's hesitation the Lieutenant slid very quietly down into it. Some morsels of loose earth crumbled under him, rolled down and fell with tiny splashings into the pool at the bottom. To the Lieutenant the noise was most disconcertingly loud and alarming, and cursing himself for a fool not to have thought of the water and the certainty of his loosening earth to fall into it, he crouched motionless, listening for any sound that would tell of the listening German's alarm. Another light rose, filling the mist with soft white radiance and outlining the edge of the crater above him. It outlined also the dark shape of a figure halted apparently in the very act of crawling down into the crater from the opposite side. The Lieutenant's first flashing thought was that the German watcher had heard him and was moving to investigate, his second and quick-following was of another German holding still until the light fell. But a third idea came so instantly on the other two that, before the soaring flare dropped, he had time to move sharply, bringing the man's outline more clearly against the light. That look and the shape, beside but clear of the body, of a bent leg, crooked knee upward, confirmed his last suspicion. Studd

slid over soundless as a diving otter and down beside him, and the Lieutenant whispered 'See those two on the edge?'

'Both dead, sir,' said Studd, and the Lieutenant nodded and heaved a little sigh of relief. 'And I think that first was a dead 'un too.'

'Yes,' whispered the Lieutenant. 'Looked natural and listening hard. Remember now, though, he was bareheaded. Dead all right. Come on.'

They crept out past the two dead men and, abating no fraction of their caution, moved noiselessly forward again. They passed many more dead in the next score of yards, dead twisted and contorted to every possible and impossible attitude of unmistakable death and uncannily life-like postures, and came at last to scattered fragments and loose hanging strands of barbed-wire entanglements. Here, according to previous arrangement, Studd—ex-poacher of civilian days and expert scout of the battalion—moved ahead and led the way. Broken strands of wire he lifted with gingerly delicate touch and laid aside. Fixed ones he raised, rolled silently under and held up for the Lieutenant to pass. Taut ones he grasped in one hand, slid the jaws of his wire-nippers over and cut silently between his left-hand fingers, so that the fingers still gripped the severed ends, released the ends carefully, one hand to each, and squirmed through the gap.

There was very little uncut wire, but the stealthy movements took time, and half an hour had passed from first wire to last and to the moment when the Lieutenant, in imitation of the figure before him, flattened his body close to the muddy ground and lay still and listening. For five long minutes they lay, and then Studd twisted his head and shoulders back. 'Nobody,' he whispered. 'Just wait here a minute, sir.' He slipped back past the Lieutenant and almost immediately returned to his side. 'I've cut the loose wires away,' he said. 'Mark this spot and try'n hit it if we have to bolt quick. See—look for this,' and he lifted a bayoneted rifle lying beside them, and stabbed the bayonet down into the ground with the rifle butt standing up above the edge of the broken parapet.

'Cross the trench,' whispered the Lieutenant, 'and along behind it. Safer there. Any sentry looking out forward?'

Studd vanished over the parapet and the Lieutenant squirmed after him. The trench was wide and broken-walled back and front, and both clambered up the other side and began to move along the far edge. In some places the trench narrowed and deepened, in others it widened and shallowed in tumbled shell-

craters, in others again was almost obliterated in heaped and broken earth. The mist had closed down and thickened to a whity-grey blanket, and the two moved more freely, standing on their feet and moving stooped and ready to drop at a sound. They moved for a considerable distance without seeing a single German.

Studd halted suddenly on the edge of a trench which ran into the one they were following.

'Communication trench,' said the Lieutenant softly. 'Doesn't seem to be a soul in their front line.'

'No, sir,' said Studd, but there was a puzzled note in his voice.

'Is this their front line we've been moving along?' said the Lieutenant with sudden suspicion. 'Those lights look further off than they ought.'

The dim lights certainly seemed to be far out on their left and a little behind them. A couple of rifles cracked faintly, and they heard a bullet sigh and whimper overhead. Closer and with sharper reports half a dozen rifles *rap-rapped* in answer—but the reports were still well out to their left and behind them.

'Those are German rifles behind us. We've left the front line,' said the Lieutenant with sudden conviction. 'Struck slanting back. Been following a communication trench. *Damn!*'

Studd without answering dropped suddenly to earth and without hesitation the Lieutenant dropped beside him and flattened down. A long silence, and the question trembling on his lips was broken by a hasty movement from Studd. 'Quick, sir—back,' he said, and hurriedly wriggled back and into a shallow hole, the Lieutenant close after him.

There was no need of the question now. Plainly both could hear the squelch of feet, the rustle of clothes, the squeak and click of leather and equipment. Slowly, one by one, a line of men filed past their hiding-place, looming grey and shadowy through the mist, stumbling and slipping so close by that to the Lieutenant it seemed that only one downward glance from one passing figure was needed to discover them. Tumultuous thoughts raced. What should he do if they were discovered? Pass one quick word to Studd to lie still, and jump and run, trusting to draw pursuit after himself and give Studd a chance to escape and report? Or call Studd to run with him, and both chance a bolt back the way they came? The thick mist might help them, but the alarm would spread quickly to the front trench. . . . Or should he snatch his revolver—he wished he hadn't put it back in his holster—blaze off all his rounds,

yell and make a row, rousing the German trench to fire and disclose the strength holding it? Could he risk movement enough to get his revolver clear? And all the time he was counting the figures that stumbled past—five . . . six . . . seven . . . eight Thirty-four he counted and then, just as he was going to move, another lagging two. After that and a long pause he held hurried consultation with Studd.

'They're moving up the way we came down,' he said. 'We're right off the front line. Must get back. Daren't keep too close to this trench though. D'you think we can strike across and find the front line about where we crossed?'

'Think so, sir,' answered Studd. 'Must work a bit left-handed.'

'Come on then. Keep close together,' and they moved off.

In three minutes the Lieutenant stopped with a smothered curse at the jar of wire caught against his shins. 'Ware wire,' he said, and both stopped and felt at it. 'Nippers,' he said. 'We must cut through.' He pulled his own nippers out and they started to cut a path. 'Tang,' his nippers swinging free of a cut wire struck against another, and on the sound came a sharp word out of the mist ahead of them and apparently at their very feet a guttural question in unmistakable German. Horrified, the Lieutenant stood stiff frozen for a moment, turned sharp and fumbled a way back, his heart thumping and his nerves tingling in anticipation of another challenge or a sudden shot. But there was no further sound, and presently he and Studd were clear of the wire and hurrying as silently as they could away from the danger.

They stopped presently, and the Lieutenant crouched and peered about him. 'Now where are we?' he said, and then, as he caught the sound of suppressed chuckling from Studd crouched beside him, 'What's the joke? I don't see anything specially funny about this job.'

'I was thinkin' of that Germ back there, sir,' said Studd, and giggled again. 'About another two steps an' we'd have fell fair on top of 'im. Bit of a surprise like for 'im, sir.'

The Lieutenant grinned a little himself. 'Yes,' he said, 'but no more surprise than I got when he sang out. Now what d'you think is our direction?'

Studd looked round him, and pointed promptly. The Lieutenant disagreed and thought the course lay nearly at right angles to Studd's selection. He had his compass with him and examined it carefully. 'This bit of their front line ran roughly north and south,' he said. 'If we move west it must fetch us back

on it. We must have twisted a bit coming out of that wire—but there's west,' and he pointed again.

'I can't figure it by compass, sir,' said Studd, 'but here's the way I reckon we came.' He scratched lines on the ground between them with the point of his wire nippers. 'Here's our line, and here's theirs—running this way.'

'Yes, north,' said the Lieutenant.

'But then it bends in towards ours—like this—an' ours bends back.'

'Jove, so it does,' admitted the Lieutenant, thinking back to the trench map he had studied so carefully before leaving. 'And we moved north behind their trench, so might be round the corner; and a line west would just carry us along behind their front line.'

Studd was still busy with his scratchings. 'Here's where we came along and turned off the communication trench. That would bring them lights where we saw them—about here. Then we met them Germs and struck off this way, an' ran into that wire, an' ran back—here. So I figure we got to go that way,' and he pointed again.

'That's about it,' agreed the Lieutenant. 'But as that's toward the wire and our friend who sang out, we'll hold left a bit to try and dodge him.'

He stood and looked about him. The mist was wreathing and eddying slowly about them and shut out everything except a tiny patch of wet ground about their feet. There was a distinct whiteness now about the mist, and a faint glow in the whiteness that told of daylight coming, and the Lieutenant moved hurriedly. 'If it comes day and the mist lifts we're done in,' he said, and moved in the chosen direction. They reached wire again, but watching for it this time avoided striking into it and turned, skirting it towards their left. But the wire bent back and was forcing them left again, or circling back, and the Lieutenant halted in despair. 'We'll have to cut through again and chance it,' he said. 'We can't risk hanging about any longer.'

'I'll just search along a few yards, sir, and see if there's an opening,' said Studd.

'Both go,' said the Lieutenant. 'Better keep together.'

Within a dozen yards both stopped abruptly and again sank to the ground, the Lieutenant cursing angrily under his breath. Both had caught the sound of voices, and from their lower position could see against the light a line of standing men, apparently right across their path. A spatter of rifle fire sounded from somewhere out in the mist, and a few bullets whispered high overhead. Then came

the distant *thud, thud, thud* of half a dozen guns firing. One shell wailed distantly over, another passed closer with a savage rush, a third burst twenty yards away with a glaring flash that penetrated even the thick fog. The two had a quick glimpse of a line of Germans in long coats ducking their 'coal-scuttle' helmets and throwing themselves to ground. They were not more than thirty feet away, and there were at least a score of them. When their eyes recovered from the flash of the shell, the two could see not more than half a dozen figures standing, could hear talking and laughing remarks, and presently heard scuffling sounds and saw figure after figure emerge from the ground.

'Trench there,' whispered Studd leaning in to the Lieutenant's ear. 'They jumped down.'

'Yes,' breathed the Lieutenant. He was fingering cautiously at the wire beside him. It was staked out, and as far as he could discover there was something like two foot clearance between the ground and the bottom strands. It was a chance, and the position was growing so desperate that any chance was worth taking. He touched Studd's elbow and began to wriggle under the wires. Six feet in they found another line stretched too low to crawl under and could see and feel that the patch of low wire extended some feet. 'More coming,' whispered Studd, and the Lieutenant heard again that sound of squelching steps and moving men. They could still see the grey shadowy figures of the first lot standing in the same place, and now out of the mist emerged another shadowy group moving down the line and past it. There was a good deal of low-toned calling and talking between the two lots, and the Lieutenant, seizing the chance to work under cover of the noise, began rapidly to nip his way through the wire. It was only because of their low position they could see the Germans against the lighter mist, and he was confident, or at least hoped, that from the reversed position it was unlikely they would be seen. The second party passed out of sight, and now the two could see a stir amongst the first lot, saw them hoist and heave bags and parcels to their shoulders and backs, and begin to move slowly in the opposite direction to that taken by the party passing them.

'Ration party or ammunition carriers,' said Studd softly.

'And moving to the front line,' said the Lieutenant quickly. In an instant he had a plan made. 'We must follow them. They'll guide us to the line. We keep close as we can . . . not lose touch and not be seen. Quick, get through here.' He started to nip rapidly through the wires. The party had moved and the outline

of the last man was blurring and fading into the mist. The Lieutenant rose and began to stride over the low wires. A last barrier rose waist high. With an exclamation of anger he fell to work with the nippers again, Studd assisting him. The men had vanished. The Lieutenant thrust through the wires. His coat caught and he wrenched it free, pushed again and caught again. This time the stout fabric of the trench coat held. There was no second to waste. The Lieutenant flung loose the waist-belt, tore himself out of the sleeves and broke clear, leaving the coat hung in the wires. 'Freer for running if we have to bolt at the end,' he said, and hurried after the vanished line, with Studd at his heels. They caught up with it quickly—almost too quickly, because the Lieutenant almost overran one laggard who had halted and was stooped or kneeling doing something to his bundle on the ground. The Lieutenant just in time saw him rise and swing the bundle to his shoulder and hurry after the others. Behind him came the two, close enough to keep his dim outline in sight, stooping low and ready to drop flat if need be, moving as silently as possible, checking and waiting crouched down if they found themselves coming too close on their leader. So they kept him in sight until he caught the others up, followed them again so long that a horrible doubt began to fill the lieutenant's mind, a fear that they were being led back instead of forward. He would have looked at his compass but at that moment the dim grey figures before him vanished abruptly one by one.

He halted, listening, and Studd at his elbow whispered 'Down into a trench, sir.' Both sank to their knees and crawled carefully forward, and in a minute came to the trench and the spot where the man had vanished. 'Coming near the front line, I expect,' said the Lieutenant, and on the word came the crack of a rifle from the mist ahead. The Lieutenant heaved a sigh of relief. 'Keep down,' he said. 'Work along this trench edge. Sure to lead to the front line.'

A new hope flooded him. There was still the front trench to cross, but the ease with which they had first come over it made him now, turning the prospect over in his mind as he crawled, consider that difficulty with a light heart. His own trench and his friends began to seem very near. Crossing the neutral ground, which at other times would have loomed as a dangerous adventure, was nothing after this hair-raising performance of blundering about inside the German lines. He moved with certainty and confidence, although yet with the greatest caution. Twice they

came to a belt of wire running down to the edges of the trench they followed. The Lieutenant, after a brief pause to look and listen, slid down into the trench, passed the wire, climbed out again, always with Studd close behind him. Once they lay flat on the very edge of the trench and watched a German pass along beneath them so close they could have put a hand on his helmet. Once more they crouched in a shell-hole while a dozen men floundered along the trench. And so they came at last to the front line. Foot by foot they wriggled close up to it. The Lieutenant at first saw no sign of a German, but Studd beside him gripped his arm with a warning pressure, and the Lieutenant lay motionless. Suddenly, what he had taken to be part of the outline of the parapet beyond the trench moved and raised, and he saw the outline of a steel-helmeted head and a pair of broad shoulders. The man turned his head and spoke, and with a shock the Lieutenant heard a murmur of voices in the trench, saw figures stir and move in the mist. Studd wriggled noiselessly closer and, with his lips touching the Lieutenant's ear, whispered 'I know where we are. Remember this bit we're on. We crossed to the left of here.'

They backed away from the trench a little and worked carefully along it to their left, and presently Studd whispered 'About here, I think.' They edged closer in, staring across for sight of the silhouette of the rifle butt above the parapet. The mist had grown thicker again and the parapet showed no more than a faint grey bulk against the lighter grey. The trench appeared to be full of men—'standing to' the Lieutenant supposed they were—and they moved at the most appalling risk, their lives hanging on their silence and stealth, perhaps on the chance of some man climbing back out of the trench. The Lieutenant was shivering with excitement, his nerves jumping at every movement or sound of a voice from the trench beside them.

Studd grasped his elbow again and pointed to the broken edge of trench where they lay, and the Lieutenant, thinking he recognised the spot they had climbed out on their first crossing, stared hard across to the parapet in search of the rifle butt. He saw it at last. But what lay between it and them? Were there Germans crouching in the trench bottom? But they must risk that, risk everything in a dash across and over the parapet. A puff of wind stirred and set the mist eddying and lifting a moment. They dare wait no longer. If the wind came the mist would go, and with it would go their chance of crossing the No Man's Land. He whispered a moment to Studd, sat up, twisted his legs round

to the edge of the trench, slid his trench dagger from its sheath and settled his fingers to a firm grip on the handle, took a deep breath, and slid over feet foremost into the trench. In two quick strides he was across it and scrambling up the parapet. The trench here was badly broken down and a muddy pool lay in the bottom. Studd caught a foot in something and splashed heavily, and a voice from a yard or two on their left called sharply. The Lieutenant slithering over the parapet heard and cringed from the shot he felt must come. But a voice to their right answered; the Lieutenant slid down, saw Studd scramble over after, heard the voices calling and answering and men splashing in the trench behind them. He rose to his feet and ran, Studd following close. From the parapet behind came the spitting bang of a rifle and the bullet whipped past most uncomfortably close. It would have been safer perhaps to have dropped to shelter in a shell-hole and crawled on after a reasonable wait, but the Lieutenant had had enough of crawling and shell-holes for one night, and was in a most single-minded hurry to get away as far and as fast as he could from Germans' neighbourhood. He and Studd ran on, and no more shots followed them. The mist was thinning rapidly, and they found their own outposts in the act of withdrawal to the trench. The Lieutenant hurried past them, zigzagged through their own wire, and with a gasp of relief jumped down into the trench. He sat there a few minutes to recover his breath and then started along the line to find Headquarters and make his report.

On his way he met the officer who had watched them leave the trench and was greeted with a laugh. 'Hullo, old cock. Some mud! You look as if you'd been crawling a bit. See any Boche?'

'Crawling!' said the Lieutenant. 'Any Boche! I've been doing nothing but crawl for a hundred years—except when I was squirming on my face. And I've been falling over Boche, treading on Boche, bumping into Boche, listening to Boche remarks—oh, ever since I can remember,' and he laughed, just a trifle hysterically.

'Did you get over their line then? If so, you're just back in time. Mist has clean gone in the last few minutes.' A sudden thought struck the Lieutenant. He peered long and carefully over the parapet. The last wisps of mist were shredding away and the jumble of torn ground and trenches and wire in the German lines was plainly visible. 'Look,' said the Lieutenant. 'Three or four hundred yards behind their line—hanging on some wire. That's my coat. . . .'

THE JUBILEE OF THE OLD DOMINION.

ON Dominion Day, in this year, July 1, the Dominion of Canada keeps its Jubilee. The British North America Bill was read for the first time in the House of Lords on February 12, 1867: it received the Royal Assent and became law on March 29: it came into operation on the following July 1. 'We are laying the foundation of a great State,' said Lord Carnarvon, in moving the second reading of the Bill,—'perhaps one which at a future date may even overshadow this country.' The Jubilee falls, appropriately enough, in the later stages of a war in which democracy is fighting and slowly winning a struggle for life or death, in which the two mother nations of Canada are side by side and shoulder to shoulder, in which Canadian soldiers, their children, have made their name immortal, holding the Ypres salient or storming the Vimy ridge. If testimony to the Dominion were needed, the war has given it for all time.

In the days of the Stuarts, the Royalist colony, Virginia, gained the name of 'The Old Dominion.' Canada, as a Dominion, is only fifty years old. Yet, as compared with the other self-governing Dominions, excepting Newfoundland, she is venerable in age; and Newfoundland, though holding honoured status among the self-governing Dominions, sturdily adheres to the good old term, colony. The mantle of 'The Old Dominion' must therefore be held to have fallen on Canada, even as in Canada our modern use of the word Dominion originated.

There is a tablet on the wall of a room in the Westminster Palace Hotel, affixed in 1911, and worded as follows:

'In this room, in 1866-7, delegates representing the provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, under the chairmanship of the Right Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald, P.C., G.C.B., framed the Act of Union, under which all British North America, except Newfoundland, is now united under one government as the Dominion of Canada.'

It is added:

'This tablet was affixed with the approval of the Right Honourable Sir Charles Tupper, Bart., P.C., G.C.M.G., C.B., one of the delegates from Nova Scotia, A.D. 1911.'

In 1866 Canada was one of several British North American provinces : it is now the British North American mainland from sea to sea. In 1866 Germany was not an Empire. I had the good fortune to be present at the luncheon at which the tablet was unveiled. It was a memorable gathering. The last surviving father of Canadian federation, Sir Charles Tupper, was present and spoke, full of life and energy though in advanced old age ; and the French Canadian Prime Minister of the Dominion, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, paid a singularly graceful and generous tribute to the work of the old man, who had been his strong political opponent. Older even than Sir Charles Tupper was the chairman on the occasion, the then High Commissioner for Canada, Lord Strathcona ; for great Canadians have been long lived, an admirable advertisement of the climate of Canada, a good omen for the long life of the Dominion.

The progress of Canada in these fifty years has been great indeed. Much might be written, much has been written, on the subject. Canada is a fruitful, and for Englishmen, as for Canadians, a delightful theme. There are so many sides to Canada ; her seniority among the young nations of the Empire, her size, her resources, her prairies, mountains, lakes and rivers, varied geography, varied history, present problems, future outlook. But I want to celebrate the Jubilee, as best I can in a short article, by trying to define and to emphasise the unique position which, to my mind, Canada holds in the past, present, and future of the British Empire. All the great provinces and peoples of the Empire have their special features of interest ; they all have their strong and their weak points ; each brings its own individual contribution to the whole great Commonwealth. There is no ground for exalting one above another ; all of them supplement the mother country and each other. Eulogy is unnecessary and impertinent ; admiration is not asked for, but understanding. What, then, is the special mark of Canada ? What is her particular place in this Commonwealth ? My answer is, that of all the provinces and partners of the Empire, not excluding India, Canada stands out as most distinctively what may be called the Index state. In the past of Canada can be found all, or well-nigh all, the elements and features which make up and characterise the past history of the Empire. From Canada of to-day, more than from any other part of the whole which includes Canada, we gain indications of our possible or likely future.

The history of Canada is the most picturesque of histories, full of light and shade. Read the chronicles of New France, told with so much force and such singular attractiveness by Francis Parkman, from Champlain to Frontenac, from Frontenac to Montcalm. Note the heroism and self-sacrifice of the early French missionaries; the transplantation of the Old World into the New, imported feudalism, so artificial on the banks of the St. Lawrence, yet so long-lived and tenacious; the sharp contrast between the habitants riveted to the soil, and the roving voyageurs and *coureurs de bois*. Follow again the fortunes of Canada under British rule, from 1763 onwards. Hold Quebec with Carleton against Arnold and Montgomery, stand with Brock by Queenston Heights or with Gordon Drummond at Lundy's Lane. Accompany Lord Durham and Charles Buller on their healing mission, and trace all that came in its train, the self-government and then the federation. Where is the making of a nation so manifest, so marked by clear and unmistakable milestones, as in Canada? Note again that, as it has been with British history, so it has been with the history of Canada: defeats and misfortunes have been blessings in disguise.

The overseas work of England, the expansion of England beyond the ocean, was the result of England coming to herself as an island Power and joining hands with Scotland. She came to herself when, and not until, all hold had been lost on the continent, not until all the prowess of Crecy and Agincourt had gone for nothing. When the war of American Independence is mentioned, it is considered to be treason for Englishmen to be other than humble and contrite; high treason to suggest that perhaps all the gain was not on the American side, all the loss not on the British. Yet it is impossible to read history fairly and squarely without coming to the conclusion that our present Empire, far more broadly and soundly based than the first Empire, was directly or indirectly the result of the war and the failure. Now turn to Canada. The British conquest of New France gave to a French possession, which had never known even municipal liberty, a wholly new life, an infinitely wider and richer life. Subjects became citizens, and learnt and used their strength. 'A happier calamity,' writes Parkman, 'never befell a people than the conquest of Canada by the British arms.' The American war followed hard on the heels of the conquest of Canada, and Canada was for the moment overrun. Let us suppose that Carleton had failed to keep Quebec, and that Great Britain had lost Canada. Or again, let us suppose

that the American colonists had been defeated and had remained within the British Empire. In either case Canada must infallibly have been swallowed up in the overwhelmingly greater population to which she would have been linked. Her future destiny was assured by what actually happened, and could not have been assured by any other possible outcome of the war. Canada was a conquered dependency, wholly overshadowed by the great British colonies to the South ; but the result of the war and of American Independence was that, recruited by United Empire Loyalists, who created the provinces of Ontario and New Brunswick, and regenerated Nova Scotia, the mainland North American possessions which still remained to Great Britain, though not yet federated, rose at once to the first rank in our overseas Empire, and a Canadian nation became a possibility.

In the making of the British Empire, as it stands to-day, two factors have been pre-eminent : the work of the chartered company, as the chartered company has been shaped by and used in British hands, and the creation and growth of colonial self-government. Among chartered companies of the past, the East India Company, which gave us India, is easily first in the list ; but a good second, still in existence, having survived the East India Company, is the Hudson Bay Company, 'The governor and company of Adventurers of England, trading into Hudson's Bay,' whose sphere was wholly within the limits of the present Dominion of Canada, and into whose territorial heritage the Dominion entered. The Canada which we took over from France is but a small fraction of the Canada that keeps her jubilee this year. The Dominion of Canada includes vast areas which came to us in our own right or by our own claim, and not as the result of conquest. The French gave us no title, that we recognised, to the Hudson Bay Territories, none whatever to British Columbia. The present grain lands of the North-West were never conquered appendages : they came to us in virtue of the overlordship or the claim of a British company ; Canada, therefore, like India, illustrates the value of chartered companies as Empire-making machinery. As in the Empire generally, so in the Dominion of Canada, we hold partly through war, partly through peace, and largely, in war or peace, through chartered companies.

'Under wise and free institutions, . . . ' wrote Lord Durham in noble and prophetic words, 'a connexion secured by the link of kindred origin and mutual benefits may continue to bind to the

British Empire the ample territories of its North American Provinces, and the large and flourishing population by which they will assuredly be filled.'

All know that Canada was the pioneer in Colonial self-government, as it was conceded in the nineteenth century: all know that it dates from the rising in Lower and Upper Canada, from Lord Durham's consequent mission, and his masterly, far-seeing report. It was cradled in the British North American colonies, in the Canadas and Nova Scotia, and thence it passed on to the Southern continent, to New Zealand and South Africa. For the story of its inception we turn to Canada.

To Canada again we turn for its supplement and logical outcome, the federation of neighbouring self-governing communities. Canada once more was the pioneer: the British North America Act of 1867 was the beginning of larger self-governing units in the Empire, the self-governing Dominions. But Canada did not merely lead the way in federation. Canadian federation stands out yet again, in contrast to the formation of the Australian Commonwealth, and to some extent of the Union of South Africa, as having been a markedly gradual process, illustrating the slow but sure evolution which has characterised British history as a whole. Four North American colonies only at first joined hands, not without misgivings and reluctance, the two Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. The Bill was a permissive Bill, keeping the door open for other members to come in: they came in, excepting Newfoundland: out of territories which had not at the time been actually included, much less taken shape as organised communities, new provinces were from time to time created and admitted to the federation: nor is the subdividing, creating, uniting process, though fifty years have passed, yet complete. In the speech already quoted, Lord Carnarvon used the words:

'Come what may, we shall rejoice . . . that we honestly and sincerely, to the utmost of our power and knowledge, fostered their growth, recognising in it the conditions of our own greatness. We are in this measure setting the crown to the free institutions which more than a quarter of a century ago we gave them.'

The grant of self-government, the creation of the nucleus of a Dominion, the expansion from that nucleus, the growth, the evolution, all were the 'conditions of our own greatness,' all were reproduced in Canada.

Our British race has held a foremost place among the children of men in the discovery and the application of the forces of Science, and our Empire has reaped the benefit in abounding measure. In an address on 'Geography and Statescraft,' Lord Milner spoke of the railway as 'by far the most potent of modern inventions in transforming the life of mankind, potent and revolutionising everywhere, but most of all in thinly peopled and newly settled countries.' Its potency, very especially in creating larger units, is writ large throughout the Empire, in the tropics as well as in the self-governing Dominions; but where is it better illustrated than in the Dominion of Canada? The Dominion is in good truth the child of railways. The making of a railway was a *sine quâ non* in the original contract. The 145th Section of the British North America Act provides for the construction of a railway between the river St. Lawrence and the city of Halifax:

'Inasmuch as the provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick have joined in a declaration that the construction of the Intercolonial railway is essential to the consolidation of the Union of British North America, and to the assent thereto of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.'

The making of the transcontinental line, the Canadian Pacific Railway, was the condition upon which alone British Columbia joined the Dominion. When Queen Victoria came to the throne, outside the United Kingdom there was only one railway in existence in the British Empire. This was in Canada. It was a little line, referred to in Lord Durham's Report, fifteen miles long, connecting the St. Lawrence with Lake Champlain: there are now fully 31,000 miles of railway in the Dominion.

The British Empire includes nearly one-fourth of the surface of the world, and British territories or Protectorates necessarily, at this point and at that, are coterminous with the possessions of many foreign nations. Numberless, in consequence, have been the boundary questions, disputes, treaties, arbitrations, which have troubled or smoothed the waters of British diplomacy. For an illustration there is assuredly no need to look outside Canada. From 1783, when the Independence of the United States was formally recognised, down to the settlement of the Alaska boundary question in 1903, Canadian history records an almost interminable series of wrangles, of negotiations, treaties, adjustments, not usually appreciated by the people of Canada. But, though the Empire in

many or most parts of the world aligns upon foreign lands, it very rarely touches upon the home country of a white nation. Canada is the one striking exception to this rule. The whole length of the southern boundary of the Dominion, in addition to the boundary on the Alaska side, marches with the United States, a kindred nation, it is true, but for that very reason presenting peculiar difficulties, a nation not always on such close and friendly terms with the Motherland as happily prevail at the present moment. The result is that in Canada, as nowhere else in the Overseas Empire, with the possible exception of India, foreign relations have been a matter of almost daily concern.

Our Empire is an Empire of endless diversities : they constitute its strength rather than its weakness, but they demand ceaseless watchfulness and prescient statesmanship. They are diversities of all kinds, of soil and climate, of race and colour and creed. In this Dominion of the size of Europe diversities abound. It has, it is true, no appreciable native problem ; yet different types of North American Indian are to be found, and in the far north the Esquimaux. Coloured immigration from the East has been a difficult and thorny question on the Pacific coast. The bed rock of the two main white races has been a firm rock in either case. General Murray reported in 1762 that the Canadians were 'mainly of a Norman race.' The United Empire Loyalist strain leavened Ontario and the Maritime Provinces. Nowhere have Scotsmen played a more leading part than in Canada. Of late years European immigration from many sources has streamed into 'The Land of Open Doors,' and tens of thousands have migrated from the neighbouring Republic. Differing races, differing religions, diverse customs and habits of life, find scope, side by side, in Canada. All go to make a composite community within a composite Empire. This one unit experiences and illustrates the same difficulties that attend upon the whole Empire. There are incompatibilities of temperament, rivalries of creed, nationalism and aloofness by the side of Imperial patriotism, occasional clashing of provincial views or interests with those of the Dominion. They all have to be adjusted, surmounted, or got round. The same task presents itself in the Dominion as in the Empire generally, how to find from day to day a practical working compromise between very different and often jarring elements. The Dominion in its main features is a mirror of the Empire.

What of the future ? Take the geographical position of Canada.

To speak of Canada as a Dominion from sea to sea is no mere well-phrased expression of an existing and patent fact. The words have living meaning and significance. Canada is the one and only Province of the Empire which has a seaboard on both the two main oceans of the world, and stretches continuously from the Atlantic to the Pacific. This means that Canada is the great bridge of the Empire. Through Canada is the alternative British route to the East and to the South. We have perfected what in the beginning of modern history Columbus set out to achieve, a westward route to the Indies and Cathay. Suppose Canada to be eliminated from the Empire, over and above the fact of losing the greatest of the self-governing Dominions, two results would follow. On the one hand, it would be as though the keystone of an arch had dropped out, the continuity of the circle would be broken. On the other hand, the Empire would lose its balance, a prime factor in its strength. At present West, South, and East form an equipoise, each redressing the balance of the others; the three together provide an even basis, a strong, sure tripod of Empire. This, as already suggested, was the result of the War of American Independence. Before the severance of the United States, the British Empire was a lopsided Empire, overweighted in one direction. It was the loss of the old North American colonies which took us into the Southern Seas and gave us Australia and New Zealand. It was the loss of the United States which made an opening and provided adequate space in the Empire for Canada. But Canada not only fills her own space, balancing and balanced by Australasia: Canada is also the one Dominion which is a highway to other parts of the Empire. The British Empire without Great Britain would be the play of 'Hamlet' with Hamlet left out. The British Empire without Canada would be the play of 'Hamlet' with a middle act left out. One-fifth of the play, and more than one-fifth, in area, of the Empire, would in either case be lost, and what remained would have no balance and no continuity. 'To be or not to be, that is the question.' It is vital to our Empire, as at present constituted, to keep Canada.

The air has been full of schemes of reconstruction after the war; and all well-wishers of the Empire have welcomed the pronouncement on the subject, guarded, sane, and statesmanlike, which has been made by the Imperial War Conference. Recommending that, as soon as possible, after the end of the war, a special Imperial Conference should be summoned to consider 'the readjust-

ment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire,' the members of the War Conference have placed on record their view that full recognition should be given to the Dominions 'as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth,' to the importance of India in the Commonwealth, and to 'the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations.' When the special Imperial Conference meets, it is to be hoped that the agenda paper, as on the occasions of previous conferences, will contain motions, fathered by the representatives of one or more of the Overseas peoples, indicating the lines on which, and the distance to which, the onward movement may, without reluctance or heartburning, be sped. For, while the institution of an annual Imperial Cabinet, suggested by the Home Government and gladly accepted overseas, is a great and good step forward, it is all important to ask and answer the question, From what quarter should the initiative come in any scheme or proposal for constitutional readjustment? Surely the answer is that the recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations heads the bill: the safeguarding of that autonomy is the first charge upon the political assets of the Empire. The one straight way to avoid all misunderstanding or semblance of misunderstanding, any suspicion that a dominant mother country may desire to encroach upon the nationhood and the constitutional rights of the younger peoples, is for the first voice to come from them. But, if theirs should be the first voice, from which of all of them should the message come? Should not the Old Dominion point the way? Should not Canada, as ever, be the pioneer? No other Dominion has had such long and rich experience in constructive and reconstructive work. To no other Dominion have foreign relations been so omnipresent day by day. The one thing needful for us all is to be assured at what point on our onward road we shall find the signboard 'Trespassers will be prosecuted,' where and when we shall be told 'Thus far and no further—for the time being.' It is from a Dominion with a double nationality, rather than from an all-British State, that we shall gather when to halt. All will probably go as far as Canada is prepared to go, but Canada may possibly stop short of the point to which some other of the partners might be willing to move on.

The Blue-books of past Colonial and Imperial Conferences make instructive reading. They bring to light the divergence of view which prevails at this time or at that, or at all times, between

one Dominion and another, correcting the impression which is, or used to be, somewhat widely spread, that, in regard to Empire questions, the Dominions are grouped on one side, and the mother country is isolated on the other. They remind us too that the autonomy of the young nations implies the party system in the young nations, and that the same Dominion may speak with one voice at one conference, and with another at the next, because in the meantime the Opposition has become the Government, and views and Prime Ministers have changed. The moral to be drawn from them is that, in order to interpret the facts aright, and in order correctly to forecast the future, we have to try to find the Greatest Common Measure of the political feeling of an Overseas community through a long term of years, during which both parties or all parties have in turn spoken for the whole. Similarly, to find the Greatest Common Measure of public opinion upon the readjustment of constitutional relations, first in each individual Dominion, and next in the whole Empire, will be the very special task of the coming Conference. For, in the first place, no constitutional change, affecting the whole Empire, can be carried by a majority of the Partners: the dissenting Partners can and will register their dissent and stand outside—not the Empire but the readjustment; and, in the second place, no constitutional change will be permanent or fruitful, if the spokesmen of the Dominions at the conference are purely party leaders, if the consent of the partners, which carries the change, is only the consent of the dominant party in one or other or all of the Dominions at the particular time. If the settlement is to be comprehensive of the whole Commonwealth and to be for all time, if it is not to lead to reaction and possibly to dissolution of partnership, the Ayes that have it must be the Ayes of the whole Empire and of practically the whole of each contracting party.

The record of the Colonial Conference of 1902 gives special food for thought; for this Conference, it will be remembered, was held immediately after the end of the South African War. In that war there had been Imperial co-operation to an extent far beyond anything that had gone before, while, on the other hand, the magnitude of the crisis, together with the course taken by the war, had indicated the need for a common Defence policy and a uniform system of Defence forces. In the midst of the war, New Zealand, always to the front in Imperial outlook, had passed a law, empowering the establishment of an Imperial reserve force

in the colony, a body of men to be trained in readiness for active service for the Empire, in case of emergency, outside New Zealand ; and on the agenda paper for the following Conference Mr. Seddon, then Prime Minister of New Zealand, entered a motion, proposing that this principle should be adopted 'in each of His Majesty's Dominions over the Seas.' In India it had already been adopted : the Imperial Service troops of the Feudatory States are its living embodiment. The motion came to nothing. It commended itself neither to Canada nor to Australia. By the representatives of those two Dominions, but especially by the Canadians, the proposal was held to be 'objectionable in principle as derogating from the powers of self-government.' To any steps in the direction of an Imperial fleet or an Imperial army, under central control, the Canadian ministers declared themselves to be unable to assent, 'not so much from the expense involved, as from a belief that the acceptance of the proposals would entail an important departure from the principle of colonial self-government.' The main outcome of this Conference was contributions to the Royal Navy, either granted for the first time or increased in amount, from all the Dominions except Canada : Canada stood out. At this Conference, and later again, in 1907 and 1911, the Prime Minister who represented Canada was the gifted French Canadian, Sir Wilfrid Laurier ; and in his jealous guardianship of the autonomy of Canada, when, for instance, in 1911, he laid down, 'We have taken the position in Canada that we do not think we are bound to take part in every war, and that our fleet may not be called upon in all cases,' he may be held to have more especially represented French Canadian tradition and the political views of the Province of Quebec, whence he derived his most solid political support. Yet the Life of Sir Charles Tupper, determined opponent of Laurier and pronounced Imperialist, shows that he too fought shy of Imperial Federation, as tending to trench upon the nationhood of the Dominion which he had helped to bring to birth. Some twenty years ago Canada took the initiative in giving trade preference to the mother country : she gave and did not wait to claim reciprocity. It was a very practical proof of attachment and goodwill, but it involved no possible question as to autonomy : in fact it was a marked expression of autonomy.

But there came a change of government in Canada, and the present Prime Minister replaced Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The question of Naval Defence loomed large again. Australia, who in 1902

had increased her contribution to the Royal Navy, had by this time adopted the alternative of creating a Commonwealth fleet, and Canada had been slowly moving in the same direction. But, faced with the German challenge to the sea power of the Empire, Sir Robert Borden, in the Canadian House of Commons, in December 1912, moved a vote of \$35,000,000, to add three battleships to the Royal Navy. He found this course in no way incompatible with or antagonistic to Canadian autonomy: his outlook was expressed in words used in England, 'Canada does not propose to be an "adjunct" even of the British Empire, but, as has been well and eloquently expressed, to be a great part in a greater whole'; and in words used in Canada, 'When Great Britain no longer assumes sole responsibility for defence upon the high seas, she can no longer undertake to assume sole responsibility for and control of foreign policy.' Strongly opposed by Laurier and his followers, his naval programme was, through the agency of the Senate, blocked for the time, and then came the war. When the war is over, and peace conditions prevail again, if Canada can provide us with the Greatest Common Measure of Sir Robert Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier, we shall know where we stand as regards readjustment in the Empire.

For Canada, it must be repeated, is a mirror of the Empire, and the views of these two statesmen respectively are the views between which, if any readjustment is to come, a *via media* must be found. Both men place autonomy in the forefront of all,—but they look at it from somewhat different angles. From the one point of view, more active co-operation in the Empire is the crown and logical outcome of wholly assured and fully recognised autonomy; from the other, participation in control outside Canada may mean possibility of limiting control inside Canada. The one man aims at securing for the Canadian partner in the firm of Great Britain and Sons Unlimited a larger and more active share in the general business of the firm; with the other, the great concern is to keep the Canadian account with the firm under the undivided control of the Canadian partner. The one would have Canada a greater part of a whole, the other would have Canada a greater whole of a part. So it has been beforetime in the story of Canada. When federation was in the womb, there were the Joseph Howes, wedded alike to colonial autonomy and to the traditions of Empire, who feared for the swamping of the smaller in the greater whole: there were the Macdonalds, who saw in the greater whole a wider future

for the component parts. In the result, the whole scheme of Canadian Confederation, in Sir John Macdonald's words, bore upon its face the marks of compromise. Very gradually the first Dominion was gathered together, in accordance alike with British instinct and with the actual condition of Canada. The precedent points to a slow process, to gradual development, if a lasting movement is to be made in the direction of closer union of the Empire.

It is conceivable, though not likely, nor probably to be desired, that the permissive clauses of the British North America Act may suggest a partial solution of the Empire problem. It has been seen that the Act provided for the admission of new members into the Dominion, that the door was expressly and specifically left open; and one of the colonies named, Newfoundland, has, after fifty years, not entered in. It might be, in like manner, that some of the partners of the Empire would agree on terms of closer partnership, leaving the door open to dissenting partners, who preferred for the time being the *status quo*. It has been seen too that the Act provided for subsequent incorporation in the Dominion of 'Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory': that this incorporation soon took place, and, as the years went on, was followed by the creation of new provinces out of these territories, with full rights of partnership in the ever-developing Canadian firm. Here, again, may possibly be discerned a guide post to a future in which States of the Empire, not now self-governing, will rise to a higher political level and to equal rights. Many and fruitful analogies are to be found in Canada.

To my eyes the Dominion of Canada within the British Empire is as a city set on a hill, not least because, side by side with the greatest of modern republics, it stands for constitutional monarchy in the New World. The inchoate Confederation adopted the term Dominion as being nearly allied to kingdom, and the Viceroy who lately came home from Canada is the son of the great Queen who signed the Dominion's birth certificate. Under constitutional monarchy the Empire has grown to its present estate: freedom has broadened out, yet tradition has been kept: the personal, human element has survived in the Sovereign, to hold us all together. Outside and above all conflicting parties and interests, the Crown forms a bond, for which no elected chief magistrate and no parliamentary machine could possibly be an adequate substitute. Under 'the stable authority of an hereditary monarchy,

on which Lord Durham laid so much stress, coupling it with free institutions, Canada has worked out and is still working out her destiny. For a century and a half she has threaded her onward path through singular complexities, perpetually reconciling unity and diversity, and as often setting precedents to be followed elsewhere within the Empire. The fifty years that are now coming to an end have been the latest and greatest chapter in long and patient development. Fifty years fill a large space in the life of a man, they are but a fraction of the life of a vigorous and healthy people. That Jubilees and centenaries may accumulate to the Dominion of Canada, in the future, as in the past, a pioneer State of the Empire, will be the birthday wish of all who have studied Canadian history, seen Canadian lands and cities, or known the sons and daughters of Canada. It may be that, in the coming time, the possibility which Lord Carnarvon contemplated will come to pass, that the 'great State' may 'overshadow this country.' Still British citizens can have but one wish for Canada—May her shadow never grow less.

C. P. LUCAS.

May 19, 1917.

ON THE WINGS OF THE MORNING.

A SUDDEN roar, a mighty rushing sound,
 A jolt or two, a smoothly sliding rise,
 A tumbled blur of disappearing ground,
 And then all sense of motion slowly dies :
 Quiet and calm, the earth slips past below,
 As underneath a bridge still waters flow.

My turning wing inclines towards the ground ;
 The ground itself glides up with graceful swing,
 And at the planes' far tip twirls slowly round,
 Then drops from sight again beneath the wing,
 To slip away serenely as before,
 A cubist patterned carpet on the floor.

Hills gently sink and valleys gently fill ;
 The flattened fields grow ludicrously small ;
 Slowly they pass beneath, and slower still,
 Until they hardly seem to move at all.
 Now suddenly they disappear from sight,
 Hidden by fleeting, gathering wisps of white.

The wing tips, faint and dripping, dimly show,
 Blurred by the wreaths of mist that intervene ;
 Weird half-seen shadows flicker to and fro
 Across the pallid fog—bank's blinding screen.
 At last the choking mists release their hold,—
 Blue spreads my world, with silver bathed and gold.

Clear is the air, more clear than sparkling wine,
 Compared with this, wine is a turgid brew :
 The far horizon makes a clean-cut line
 Between the silver and the depthless blue.
 Out of the snow-white level reared on high
 Glittering hills of vapour meet the sky.

Outside the wind-screen's shelter, gales may race,
But in the seat a cool and gentle breeze
Blows steadily upon my grateful face.
I sit here motionless and at my ease,
Contented just to loiter in the sun
And gaze around me till the day is done.

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And so I sit, half sleeping, half awake,
Dreaming a happy dream of golden days,
Until at last with a reluctant shake
I rouse myself, and, with a lingering gaze
At all the splendour of the vapoury plain,
Make ready to come back to earth again.

The engine stops : a grateful silence reigns,
Silence, not broken, but intensified
By the soft, sleepy wires' insistent strains
That rise and fall, as with a sweeping glide
I circle down the well-oiled sides of space,
Towards that lower, less-enchanted place.

The clouds draw nearer, changing as they come ;
Now like a flash fog grips me by the throat,
Down goes the nose ; at once the wires' low hum
Begins to rise in volume and in note,
Till, as I hurtle from the choking cloud,
It swells into a scream—keen, shrill, and loud.

The aerodrome springs into view beneath ;
I drop to meet it, steering for the edge,
Arriving in the drawing of a breath,
And, skimming low across the bordering hedge,
I touch, and jump, and skim my way ahead,
Spasmodic and ungainly, to the shed.

J. D.

A CLOSED CHAPTER.

BY BENNET COPPLESTONE.

PART II.—CLEANING UP.

Now is the winter of our discontent
 Made glorious summer . . .
 And all the clouds that lour'd . . .
 In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

THE naval operations which culminated in the action off the Falkland Islands are associated vividly in my mind with two little personal incidents. On November 12, 1914, a week after the distressful news had reached this country of the destruction by the enemy of the cruisers *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* off the Chilian coast, a small slip of paper was brought to me in an envelope which had not passed through the post. I will not say from whom or whence that paper came. Upon it were written these words: 'The battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* have left for the South Atlantic.' That was all, twelve words, but rarely has news which meant so much been packed into so small a space. The German Sea Command would have given a very great deal for the sight of that scrap of paper which, when read, I burned. For it meant that two fast battle cruisers, each carrying eight 12-inch guns, were at that moment speeding south to dispose for ever of von Spee's Pacific Squadron. The battle cruisers docked and coaled at Devonport on November 9, 10, and 11; hundreds of humble folk like myself must have known of their mission and its grim purpose, yet not then nor afterwards until their work was done did a whisper of their sailing reach the ears of Germany.

The *Invincible* and *Inflexible* coaled off St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands, and again south of the Line. At the appointed rendezvous off Rio they were joined by the *Carnarvon*, *Kent*, *Cornwall*, and *Bristol*, the armed liner *Orama*, and many colliers. Weeks had passed and yet no word of the English plans, even of the concentration in force, reached von Spee, who still thought that he had nothing more formidable to deal with than a few light cruisers and the old battleship *Canopus*.

Nothing is more difficult to kill than a legend, and perhaps

the most invulnerable of legends is that one which attributes to the German Secret Service a superhuman efficiency. I offer to the still faithful believers two facts which in a rational world would blast that legend for ever: the secret mission of the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* to the Falkland Islands in November–December 1914, and the silent transport of the original British Expeditionary Force across the Channel during the first three weeks of war. And yet, I suppose, the legend will survive. The strongest case, says Anatole France in ‘Penguin Island,’ is that which is wholly unsupported by evidence.

The second incident which sticks in my mind was a scene in a big public hall on the evening of December 9. Lord Rosebery was in the middle of a recruiting speech—chiefly addressed, as he plaintively observed, to an audience of baldheads—when there came a sudden interruption. Pink newspapers fluttered across the platform, the coat tails of the speaker were seized, and one of the papers thrust into his hands. We all waited while Lord Rosebery adjusted his glasses and read a stop-press message. What he found there pleased him, but he was in no hurry to impart his news to us. He smiled benevolently at our impatience, and deliberately worked us up to the desired pitch of dramatic intensity. Then at last he stepped forward and read:

‘At 7.30 A.M. on December 8 the *Scharnhorst*, the *Gneisenau*, the *Nürnberg*, the *Leipzig*, and the *Dresden* were sighted near the Falkland Islands by a British Squadron under Vice-Admiral Sir Frederick Sturdee. An action followed in the course of which the *Scharnhorst* (flying the flag of Admiral Graf von Spee); the *Gneisenau*, and the *Leipzig* were . . . sunk.’

At that word, pronounced with tremendous emphasis, six thousand people jumped to their feet; they shouted, they cheered, they stamped upon the floor, they sang ‘Rule Britannia’ till the walls swayed and the roof shuddered upon its joists. It was a scene less of exultation than of relief, relief that the faith of the British people in the long arm of the Royal Navy had been so fully justified. Cradock and the gallant dead of Coronel had been avenged. The mess had been cleaned up.

‘I thought,’ said Lord Rosebery, as soon as the tumult had died down, ‘I thought that would wake you up.’

At Devonport the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* had been loaded ‘to the utmost capacity,’ not only with stores and ammunition for

their own use, but with supplies to replenish the depleted magazines of their future consorts. They steamed easily well out of sight of land, except when they put in to coal off St. Vincent, and made the trip of 4000 miles to the rendezvous near the Line in a little over fourteen days. They cleared the Sound in the evening of November 11, and found the other cruisers I have mentioned awaiting them in the early morning of November 26. Two days passed, days of sweltering tropic heat, during which the stores, brought by the battle cruisers, were parcelled out among the other ships and coal was taken in by all the ships from the attendant colliers. The speed of a far-cruising squadron is determined absolutely by its coal supplies. When voracious eaters of coal like battle cruisers undertake long voyages, it behoves them to cut their fighting speed of some twenty-eight knots down to a cruising speed of about one-half. By the morning of Saturday, November 28, the now concentrated and fully equipped avenging Squadron was ready for its last lap of 2500 miles to the Falkland Islands. The English vessels, spread out in a huge fan, swept down, continually searching for the enemy off the coasts of South America, where rumour hinted that he had taken refuge. The several ships steamed within the extreme range of visible signalling—so that no tell-tale wireless waves might crackle forth warnings to von Spee. It was high summer in the south and the weather glorious, though the temperature steadily fell as the chilly solitudes of the Falklands were approached. No Germans were sighted, and the Falkland Islands were reached before noon on December 7. The Squadron had already been met and joined by the light cruiser *Glasgow*. The old *Canopus*, so slow and useless as a battleship that she had been put aground on the mud of the inner harbour (Port Stanley) to protect the little settlement there, was found at her useful but rather inglorious post. Most of the vessels anchored in the large outer harbour (Port William) and coaling was begun at once, but though it was continued at dawn of the following day it was not then destined to be completed.

Up to this moment the plans of Whitehall had worked to perfection. The two great battle cruisers had arrived at the rendezvous from England, the Squadron had secretly concentrated and then searched the South Atlantic, the Falkland Islands had been secured from a successful surprise attack which would have given much joy to our enemies, yet not a whisper of his fast approaching doom had sped over the ether to von Spee. Throughout the critical weeks of our activity he had dawdled irresolutely off Valparaiso. All our

ships were ready for battle, even the light cruiser *Glasgow*, so heavily battered in the Coronel action that her inside had been built up with wooden shores till it resembled the 'Epping Forest,' after which the lower deck had christened it, and she had a hole as big as a church door in one side above the water-line. Yet Captain Luce and his men were full of fight; they had their hurts and their humiliation to avenge and meant to get their own back with interest. They did; their chance came upon the following day, and they used it to the full.

Whitehall had done its best, and now came a benevolent Joss to put the crowning seal upon its work. Coronel was bad black Joss, but the Falkland Islands will go down to history as a shining example of the whiteness of the Navy's good Joss when in a mood of real benignity. We desired two things to round off the scheme roughed out at the Admiralty on November 6: we wanted—though it was the last thing which we expected—we wanted the German Pacific Squadron to walk into the trap which had so daintily been prepared, and they came immediately, on the very first morning after our arrival at the Falkland Islands, at the actual moment when Vice-Admiral Sturdee and Rear-Admiral Stoddart (of the *Carnarvon*), with heads bent over a big chart, were discussing plans of search. They might have come and played havoc with the Islands on any morning during the previous five weeks, yet they did not come until December 8, when we were just ready and most heartily anxious to receive them hospitably. We wanted a fine clear day with what the Navy call 'full visibility.' We got it on December 8. And this was a very wonderful thing, for the Falkland Islands are cursed with a vile cold climate, almost as cold in the summer of December as in the winter of June. It rains there about 230 days in the year, and even when the rain does not fall fog is far more frequent than sunshine. The climate of the Falklands is even some points more forbidding than the dreadful climate of Lewis in the Hebrides, which it closely resembles. Yet now and then, at rare intervals, come gracious days, and one of them, the best of the year, dawned upon December 8. The air was bright and clear, visibility was at its maximum, the sea was calm, and a light breeze blew gently from the north-west. Our gunners had a full view to the horizon and a kindly swell to swing the gunsights upon their marks. For Sturdee and his gunners it was a day of days. Had von Spee come upon a wet and dull morning all would have been spoiled; he could have got away, his squadron could have

scattered, and we should have had many weary weeks of search before compassing his destruction. But he came upon the one morning of the year when we were ready for him and the perfect weather conditions made escape impossible. Our gunnery officers from their spotting tops could see as far as even the great 12-inch guns could shoot. When the Fates mean real business there is no petty higgling about their methods; they ladle out Luck not in spoonfuls but with shovels.

The Squadron which had come so far to clean up the mess of Coronel was commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir F. C. Doveton Sturdee, who had been plucked out of his office chair at the Admiralty—he was Director of Naval Intelligence—and thrown up upon the quarter-deck of the *Invincible*. He was the right man for the job, a cool-headed scientific sailor who would make full use of the power and speed of his big ships and yet run no risk of suffering severe damage thousands of miles away from a repairing base. Those who criticise his leisurely deliberation in the action, and the long-range fighting tactics which dragged out the death agony of the *Scharnhorst* for three and a half hours and of the *Gneisenau* for five, forget that to Sturdee an hour or two of time, and a hundred or two rounds of heavy shell, were as nothing when set against the possibility of damage to his battle cruisers. His business was to sink a very capable and well-armed enemy at the minimum of risk to his own ships, and so he determined to fight at a range—on the average about 16,000 yards ($9\frac{1}{2}$ land miles)—which made his gunnery rather ineffective and wasteful, yet certain to achieve its purpose in course of time.

Just as von Spee at Coronel, having the advantage of greater speed and greater power, could do what he pleased with the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*, so Sturdee with his battle cruisers could do what he pleased with von Spee. The *Invincible* and *Inflexible* could steam at twenty-eight knots—they were clean ships—while the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*, now five months out of dock, could raise little more than twenty. The superiority of the English battle cruisers in guns was no less than in speed. Each carried eight 12-inch guns, firing a shell of 850 lb., while von Spee's two armoured cruisers were armed with eight 8.2-inch guns, firing shell of 275 lb. Sturdee, with his great advantage of speed, could set the range outside the effective capacity of von Spee's guns, secure against anything but an accidental plunging shot upon his decks, while the light German 6-inch armour upon sides and

barbettes was little protection against his own 12-inch armour-piercing shell. Sturdee could keep his distance and pound von Spee to bits at leisure. The 'visibility' was perfect, space was unlimited, the Germans had no port of refuge, and from dawn to sunset Sturdee had sixteen hours of working daylight. He was in no hurry, though one may doubt if he expected to take so unconscionable a time as three and a half hours to sink the *Scharnhorst* and five hours to dispose of the *Gneisenau*. It was not that Sturdee's gunnery was bad—relatively, that is, to the gunnery of other ships or of other navies. The word bad suggests blame. But it was certainly ineffective. After the Falkland Islands action, and after those running fights in the North Sea between battle cruisers, it became dreadfully clear that naval gunnery is still in its infancy. All the brains and patience and mechanical ingenuity which have been lavished upon the problem of how to shoot accurately from a rapidly moving platform at a rapidly moving object, all the appliances for range-finding and range-keeping and spotting, leave a margin of guesswork in the shooting, which is a good deal bigger than the width of the target fired at. The ease and accuracy of land gunnery in contrast with the supreme difficulty and relative inaccuracy of sea gunnery were brought vividly before me once in conversation with a highly skilled naval gunner. 'Take a rook rifle,' said he, 'put up a target upon a tree, measure out a distance, sit down, and fire. You will get on to your target after two or three shots and then hit it five times out of six. You will be a land gunner with his fixed guns, his observation posts, his aeroplanes or kite balloons, his maps upon which he can measure up his ranges. Then get into a motor-car with your rook rifle, get a friend to drive you rapidly along a country road, and standing up try what sport you make of hitting the rabbits which are running and jumping about in the fields. That, exaggerated a bit perhaps, is sea gunnery. We know our own speed and our own course, but we don't know exactly either the enemy's speed or the enemy's course; we have to estimate both. As he varies his course and his speed—he does both constantly—he throws out our calculations. It all comes down to range-finding and spotting, trial and error. Can you be surprised that naval gunnery, measured by land standards, is wasteful and ineffective?' 'No,' said I, 'I am surprised that you ever hit at all.'

The English Squadron began to coal at half-past three upon

that bright summer morning of December 8, and the grimy operation proceeded vigorously until eight o'clock, when there came a sudden and most welcome interruption. Columns of smoke were observed far away to the south-east, and, presently, the funnels of two approaching vessels were made out. There were three others whose upper works had not yet shown above the horizon. Coaling was at once stopped and steam raised to full pressure. Never have our engineer staffs more splendidly justified their advance in official status than upon that day. Not only did they get their boilers and engines ready in the shortest possible time, but, in the subsequent action, they screwed out of their ships a knot or two more of speed than they had any right to do. The action was gained by speed and gun power; without the speed—the speed of clean-bottomed ships against those which, after five months at sea, had become foul—the power of the great guns could not have been fully developed. So, when we remember Sturdee and his master gunners and gunnery officers in the turrets and aloft in the spotting tops, let us also remember the master engineers hidden out of sight far below who gave to the gunners their opportunity.

The battle cruisers, whose presence it was desired to conceal until the latest moment, poured oil upon their furnaces and, veiled in clouds of the densest smoke, awaited the rising of the pressure gauges. In the outer harbour the light cruisers collected, and from her immovable position upon the mud-banks the old *Canopus* loosed a couple of pot shots from her big guns at the distant German at a range of six miles. Admiral Graf von Spee and his merry men laughed—they knew all about the *Canopus*. Then, when all was ready, the indomitable *Glasgow*, the *Kent* (own sister to the sunken *Monmouth*), and the armoured *Carnarvon* issued forth to battle. In the words of an eye-witness, later a prisoner, 'The Germans laughed till their sides ached.' A few more minutes passed, and then, from under the cover of the smoke and the low fringes of the harbour, steamed grandly out the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, cleared for action, their huge turrets fore and aft and upon either beam bristling with the long 12-inch guns, their turbines working at the fullest pressure, the flag of Vice-Admiral Sturdee fluttering aloft. There was no more German laughter. Von Spee and his officers and men were gallant enemies, they saw instantly the moment the battle cruisers issued forth, overwhelming in their speed and power, that for themselves and for their squadron the sun had risen for the last time. They had come for sport, the easy capture of the Falkland Islands,

but sport had turned upon the instant of staggering surprise to tragedy ; nothing remained but to fight and to die as became gallant seamen. And so they fought, and so they died, all but a few whom we, more merciful than the Germans themselves at Coronel, plucked from the cold sea after the sinking of the *Gneisenau*.

The German Squadron—the two armoured cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, each with eight 8·2-inch guns, and the three light cruisers *Nürnberg*, *Dresden*, and *Leipzig*, each armed with ten 4·1-inch guns—made off at full speed, and for awhile the English Squadron followed at the leisurely gait for the battle cruisers of about twenty knots so as to keep together. It was at once apparent that our ships had the legs of the enemy, and could catch them when they pleased and could fight at any range and in any position which they chose to select. That is the crushing advantage of speed ; when to speed is added gun power a fleeing enemy has no chance at all, if no port of refuge be available for him. In weight and power of guns there was no possible comparison. The *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, which had descended from the far north to swab up the mess of Coronel, were at least three times as powerful as the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, crack gunnery ships though they might be. Their 12-inch guns could shoot with ease and with sufficient accuracy for their purpose at a range beyond the full stretch of the German 8·2-inch weapons however deftly they might be handled. Their 10-inch armour upon the turrets and conning-tower was invulnerable against chance hits when closing in, and the armoured decks covering their inner vitals were practicably impenetrable. The chances of disaster were reduced almost to nothingness by Sturdee's tactics of the waiting game. When at length he gave the order to open fire he kept out at a distance which made the percentage of his hits small, yet still made those hits which he brought off tremendously effective. A bursting charge of lyddite in the open may do little damage, even that contained in a 12-inch shell, but the same charge exploded within the decks of a cruiser is multiplied tenfold in destructiveness.

Presently the German Squadron divided, the enemy light cruisers and attendant transports seeking safety in flight from our light cruisers despatched in chase, while the armoured cruisers held on pursued by the two battle cruisers and the armoured *Carnarvon*, whose ten guns were of 7·5- and 6-inch calibre. The *Carnarvon*, light though she was by comparison with the battle cruisers, did admirable and accurate work, and proved in the action to be by no

means a negligible consort. There was no hurry. A wide ocean lay before the rushing vessels, the enemy had no opportunity of escape so long as the day held clear and fine, and the English ships could close in or open out exactly as they pleased. During most of the fight which followed the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* steered upon courses approximately parallel with those of the Germans, following them as they dodged and winded like failing hares, always maintaining that dominating position which in these days of steam corresponds with Nelson's weather gauge. It followed from their position as the chasers that they could not each use more than six guns, but this was more than compensated for by the enemy's inability to use more than four of his heavier guns in the *Scharnhorst* or *Gneisenau*.

I have met and talked with many naval officers and men who have been in action during the present war, and have long since ceased to put a question which received an invariable answer. I used to inquire 'Were you excited or sensibly thrilled either when going into action or after it had begun?' This was the substance though not the words of the question. One does not talk in that land fashion with sailor-men. The answer was always the same. 'Excited, thrilled—of course not. There was too much to do.' An action at sea is glorified drill. Every man knows his job perfectly and does it as perfectly as he knows how. Whether he be an Admiral or a ship's boy he attends to his job and has no time to bother about personal feelings. Naval work is team work, the individual is nothing, the team is everything. This is why there is a certain ritual and etiquette in naval honours; personal distinctions are very rare and are never the result of self-seeking. There is no pot-hunting in the Sea Service. Not only are actions at sea free from excitement or thrills, but for most of those who take part in them they are blind. Not one in twenty of those who fight in a big ship see anything at all—not even the gun-layers, when the range is long and they are 'following the Control.' Calmly and blindly our men go into action, calmly and blindly they fight, obeying exactly their orders, calmly and blindly when Fate wills they go down to their deaths. In their calmness and in their blindness they are the perfected fruits of long centuries of naval discipline. The Sea Service has become highly scientific, yet in taste and in sentiment it has changed little since the days of Queen Elizabeth. The English sailor, then as now, has a catlike hatred of dirt, and never fights so happily as when his belly is well filled. The officers

and men of the battle cruisers had been coaling when the enemy so obligingly turned up, and they had breakfasted so early that the meal had passed from their memories. There was plenty of time before firing could begin. So, while the engineers sweated below, those with more leisure scrubbed the black grime from their skins, and changed into their best and brightest uniforms to do honour to a great occasion. Then at noon 'all hands went to dinner.'

The big guns of the battle cruisers began to pick up the range of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* at five minutes to one, three hours after the chase had begun, when the distance from the enemy's armoured cruisers was some 18,000 yards, say ten land miles. And while the huge shots fly forth seeking their prey, let us visit in spirit for a few minutes the spotting top of the *Invincible*, and discover for ourselves how it is possible to serve great guns with any approach to accuracy, when both the pursuing and pursued ships are travelling at high speed upon different courses during which the range and direction are continually varying. The *Invincible* worked up at one time to twenty-nine knots (nearly thirty-four miles an hour), though not for long, since a lower speed was better suited to her purpose, and the firing ranges varied from 22,000 yards down to the comparatively close quarters of six miles, at which the *Scharnhorst* and, later, the *Gneisenau* were sent to the bottom.

From the decks of the *Invincible*, when the main action opened, little could be seen of the chase except columns of smoke, but from the fire-control platform one could make out through glasses the funnels and most of the upper works of the German cruisers. At this elevation the sea horizon was distant 26,000 yards (about $15\frac{1}{2}$ land miles), and upon the day of the Falkland Islands fight 'visibility' was almost perfect. When an enemy ship can be seen its distance can be measured within a margin of error of half of one per cent.—50 yards in ten thousand; that is not difficult, but since both the enemy vessel and one's own ship are moving very fast, and courses are being changed as the enemy seeks to evade one's fire or to direct more efficiently his own guns, the varying ranges have to be kept, which is much more difficult. It follows that three operations have to be in progress simultaneously, of which each one is a check upon and a correction of the other two. First, all the range-finders have to be kept going and their readings compared; secondly, the course and speed of one's own

ship have to be registered with the closest accuracy and the corresponding speeds and courses of the enemy observed and estimated; thirdly, the pitching of one's shots has to be watched and their errors noted as closely as may be. All this delicate gunnery work is partly mechanical but chiefly human. The Germans, essentially a mechanically inhuman people, try to carry the aid of machinery farther than we do. They fit, for example, a gyroscopic arrangement which automatically fires the guns at a chosen moment in the roll of a ship. We fire as the roll brings the wires of the sighting telescopes upon the object aimed at, and can shoot better when a ship is rolling than when she is travelling upon an even keel. We believe in relying mainly upon the deft eyes and hands of our gun-layers—when the enemy is within their range of vision—and upon control officers up aloft when he is not. German gunnery can be very good, but it tends to fall to pieces under stress of battle. Ours tends to improve in action. Machinery is a good servant but a bad master.

As the shots are fired they are observed by the spotting officers to fall too short or too far over, to one side or to the other, and corrections are made in direction and in range so as to close up the 'straddle' or 'bracket' and to bring off accurate hits. At long ranges far more shots miss than hit, and we are dealing now with ranges up to ten or twelve miles. The bigger the gun the bigger the splash made by its shell when striking the water, and as the spotting officers cannot spot unless they can clearly make out the splashes, there is an accuracy—an ultimate effective accuracy—in big guns with which smaller ones cannot compete however well they may be served. For, ultimately, in naval gunnery, when ships are moving fast and ranges are changing continually, we come down to trial and error. We shoot and correct, correct and shoot, now and then find the mark and speedily lose it again, as the courses and speeds are changed. Unless we can see the splashes of the shells and are equipped with guns powerful enough to shoot fairly flat—without high elevation—we may make a great deal of noise and expend quantities of shell, but we shall not do much hurt to the enemy.

The Falkland Islands action was the Royal Navy's first experience in long range-war gunnery under favourable conditions of light—and it was rather disappointing. It revealed the immense gap which separates shooting in war and shooting at targets in time of peace. The battle cruisers sank the enemy, and suffered

little damage in doing their appointed work, and thus achieved both the purposes which Admiral Sturdee had set himself and his men. But it was a wasteful exhibition, and showed how very difficult it is to sink even lightly armoured ships by gun-fire alone. Our shells at the long ranges set were falling steeply; their effective targets were not the sides but the decks of the Germans, which were not more than 70 feet wide. If one reflects what it means to pitch a shell at a range of 10 miles upon a rapidly moving target 70 feet wide, one can scarcely feel surprised that very few shots got fairly home. We need not accept *au pied de la lettre* the declaration of Lieutenant Lietzmann—a damp and unhappy prisoner—that the *Gneisenau*, shot at for five hours, was hit effectively only twenty times, nor endorse his rather savage verdict that the shooting of the battle cruisers was ‘simply disgraceful.’ But every competent gunnery officer, in his moments of expansive candour, will agree that the results of the big-gun shooting were not a little disappointing. The Germans added to our difficulty by veiling their ships in smoke clouds and thus, to some extent, cancelled the day’s ‘visibility.’

No enemy could have fought against overwhelming odds more gallantly and persistently than did von Spee, his officers, and his highly trained long-service men. Many times, even at the long ranges at which the early part of the action was fought, they brought off fair hits upon the battle cruisers. One 8·2-inch shell from the *Scharnhorst* wrecked the *Invincible*’s ward-room and smashed all the furniture into chips except the piano, which still retained some wires and part of the keyboard. Another shell scattered the Fleet Paymaster’s money-box and strewed the decks with golden bullets. But it was all useless. Though the *Invincible* was the leading ship, and at one time received the concentrated fire of both the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*, she did not suffer a single casualty. And, while she was being peppered almost harmlessly, her huge shells, which now and then burst inboard the doomed German vessels, were setting everything on fire between decks, until the dull red glow could be seen from miles away through the gaping holes in the sides. It was a long-drawn-out agony of Hell.

Firing began seriously at 12.55 and continued, with intervals of rest for guns and men, till 4.16, when the *Scharnhorst* sank. Three hours and twenty-one minutes of Hell! Through it all the Germans stuck to their work, there was no thought of surrender; they fought so long as a gun could be brought to bear or a round

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of shell remained in their depleted magazines. Every man in the *Scharnhorst* was killed or drowned; the action was not ended when she went down and her consort *Gneisenau*, steaming through the floating bodies of the poor relics of her company, was compelled to leave them to their fate. For nearly two hours longer the *Gneisenau* kept up the fight. The battle cruisers and the smaller *Carnarvon* closed in upon her, and at a range of some six to seven land miles smashed her to pieces. By half-past five she was blazing furiously fore and aft, and at two minutes past six she rolled over and sank. Her guns spoke up to the last. As she lay upon her side her end was hastened by the Germans themselves, who, feeling that she was about to go, opened to the sea one of the broadside torpedo flats. She sank with her ensign still flying. If the whole German Navy could live, fight, and die like the Far Eastern Pacific Squadron, that Service might in time develop a true Naval Soul.

Those of the crew who remained afloat in the water after the *Gneisenau* sank were picked up by boats from the battle cruisers and the *Carnarvon*—we rescued 108 officers and men. Admiral Sturdee sent them a message of congratulation upon their rescue and of commendation upon their gallantry in battle, and every English sailor did his utmost to treat them as brothers of the sea. Officers and men lived with their captors as guests, not as prisoners, in ward-room and gun-room, and on the lower deck the English and Germans fought their battle over again in the best of honest fellowship. 'There is nothing at all to show that we are prisoners of war,' wrote a young German lieutenant to his friends in the Fatherland, expressing in one simple sentence—though perhaps unconsciously—the immortal spirit of the English Sea Service. A defeated enemy is not a prisoner; he is an unhappy brother of the sea, to be dried and clothed and made much of, and to be taught with the kindly aid of strong drink to forget his troubles.

There is little of exhilaration about a sea fight, such as that which I have briefly sketched. It seems, even to those who take part in it, to be wholly impersonal and wholly devilish. Though its result depends entirely upon the human element, upon the machines which men's brains have secreted and which their cunning hands and eyes direct, it seems to most of them while in action to have become nothing loftier than a fight between soulless machines. One cannot wonder. The enemy ship—to those few of the fighting men who can see it—is a spot upon the distant horizon from which spit out at intervals little columns of fire and smoke. There is

no sign of a living foe. And upon one's own ship the attention of everyone is absorbed by mechanical operations—the steam steering gear, the fire control, the hydraulic or electric gun mechanism, the glowing fires down below fed by their buzzing air fans, the softly purring turbines. And yet, what now appears to be utterly inhuman and impersonal is in reality as personal and human as was fighting in the days of yard-arm distances and hand-to-hand boarding. The Admiral who, from his armoured conning-tower, orders the courses and maintains the distances best suited to his terrible work; the Fire Director watching, aiming, adjusting sights with the minute care of a marksman with his rifle; the officers at their telescopes spotting the goutts of foam thrown up by the bursting shells; the engineers intent to squeeze the utmost tally in revolutions out of their beloved engines; the stokers each man rightly feeling that upon him and his efforts depends the sustained speed which alone can give mastery of manœuvre; the seamen at their stations extinguishing fire caused by hostile shells; the gunners following with huge blind weapons the keen eyes directing them from far aloft; all these are personal and very human tasks. A sea fight, though it may appear to be one between machinery, is now as always a fight between men. Battles are fought and won by men and by the souls of men, by what they have thought and done in peace time as a preparation for war, by what they do in war as the result of their peace training.

The whole art of successful war is the concentration upon an enemy at a given moment of an overwhelming force, and the concentration of that force outside the range of his observation. Both these things were done by the Royal Navy between November 6 and December 8, 1914, and their fruits were the shattered remains of von Spee's squadron lying thousands of fathoms deep in the South Atlantic. But nothing which the Admiralty planned upon November 6 would have availed had not the Royal Navy designed and built so great a force of powerful ships that, when the far-off call arose, two battle cruisers could be spared to travel seven thousand miles from the North Sea to the Falkland Islands without sensibly endangering the margin of safety of the Grand Fleet at home.

While the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* were occupying the front of the battle stage and disposing of the hostile stars, the English light cruisers were enjoying themselves in the wings in a more humble but not less useful play. The cruiser *Kent* astonished everybody.

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She was the lame duck of the Squadron, a slow old creature who could with extreme difficulty screw out seventeen knots, so that, in the company of much faster boats, her armament of fourteen 6-inch guns appeared to be practically wasted. Yet this elderly County cruiser, so short of coal that her fires were fed with boats, ladders, doors, and officers' furniture, got herself moving at over twenty-one knots, chased and caught the *Nürnberg*—which ought to have been able to romp round her—and sank the German vessel out of hand. Afterwards her officers claimed with solemn oaths that she had done twenty-four knots, but there are heights to which my credulity will not soar. One is compelled on the evidence to believe that she did catch the *Nürnberg*, but how she did it no one can explain, least of all, I fancy, her Engineer Commander himself. The *Leipzig* was rapidly overhauled by the speedy *Glasgow*, who sank her with the aid of the *Cornwall* and so repaid in full the debt of Coronel. The cruiser *Bristol*, a sister of the *Glasgow*, was sent after the German Squadron's transports and colliers, and, in company with the armed liner *Macedonia*, 'proceeded,' in naval language, 'to destroy them.' Out of the whole German Squadron the light cruiser *Dresden* (own sister to the *Emden*) alone managed to get away. She passed a precarious hunted existence for three months, and was at last disposed of off Robinson Crusoe's Island on March 14, 1915. The *Glasgow*, still intent upon collecting payment for her injuries, and our aged but active friend the *Kent*, were in at her death, which was not very glorious. The *Dresden* must have been reduced almost to her last round of ammunition. So ended that most dainty operation, the wiping out of the German Pacific Squadron and the cleaning up of the mess of Coronel. Throughout, our sailors had to do only with clean above-water fighting. There were no nasty sneaking mines or submarines to hamper free movement; the fast ship and the big gun had full play and did their work in the business-like convincing fashion which the Royal Navy has taught us to expect from it.

[For what follows I have none but German evidence, yet am loth to disbelieve it. I cannot bring myself to conceive it possible that the dull Teutonic imagination could, unaided by fact, round off in so pretty a fashion the story of the Falkland Islands.]

More than a year afterwards some fishermen upon the barren Schleswig coast observed a little water-worn dinghy lying upon the sand. She was an open boat about twelve feet long, too frail a

bark in which to essay the crossing of the North Sea. Yet upon this little dinghy was engraved the name of the *Nürnberg*! Like a homing pigeon this frail scrap of wood and iron had wandered by itself across the world from that far distant spot where its parent vessel had been sunk by the *Kent*. It had drifted home, empty and alone, through seven thousand miles of stormy seas. I like to picture to myself that Odyssey of the *Nürnberg's* dinghy during those fourteen months of lonely ocean travel. Those who know and love ships are very sure that they are alive. They are no soulless hulks of wood or steel or iron, but retain always some spiritual essence distilled from the personality of those who designed, built, and sailed them. It may be that in her dim blind way this fragment of a once fine cruiser, all that was left of a splendid squadron, was inspired to bring to her far-away northern home the news of a year-old tragedy. So she drifted ever northwards, scorched by months of sun and buffeted by months of tempest, until she came at last to rest upon her own arid shores. And the spirits of German sailors, which had accompanied her and watched over her during those long wanderings, must, when they saw her ground upon the Schleswig sands, have passed to their sleep content.

‘THE BRIDE’S GIFT FROM HER FATHER WAS . . .’

BY LADY POORE.

THESE letters were written by :

- (1) Katharine Hamilton, aged 45, wife of Colonel Kenneth Hamilton, R.E. (retired), of Chalkleigh Grange, Downshire.
- (2) Humphrey Hamilton, son of the above, aged 25 ; lieutenant, and later captain, Hillshire Fusiliers.
- (3) John Jarvis, Esq., of Chalkleigh Manor, Downshire, aged 43, in the ranks Downshire Regt. and later Hillshire Fusiliers.
- (4) Mary Jarvis, aged 40, his wife.
- (5) Sylvia Jarvis, aged 20, their daughter.

From Mrs. Hamilton in London to Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire.

July 27, 1914.

DEAREST MARY,—Yes, daughters are difficult creatures to handle. It’s just as well I have none, for I should have brought them up all wrong. Boys are educated in accordance with an accepted system which works out fairly well with all but geniuses and imbeciles, and mine is neither the one nor the other ; but no sound rules for the training of girls have yet been formulated, and ultra-modern parents and school mistresses rash enough to experimentalise produce results more astonishing than desirable in my eyes. Those who aim at eliminating vanity from the female heart and weakness from the female body by confiscating the gewgaws dear to girls, and dressing ‘flappers’ in knickerbockers and tunics in which they perform miracles of gymnastics, are responsible for letting loose upon society hordes of clumsy, hockey-playing hybrids with ill-brushed hair and ill-kept nails who have never learnt to walk or sit or stand properly. When it is too late to cultivate deportment these luckless creatures first regret their lack of grace, and then condemn in others the grace they lack. And so they roll and stump through life with their hands in their jersey pockets and their chins on their chests, imagining themselves as vastly superior to masculine men as they feel they are to feminine

women. If Humphrey should marry a girl of the new type with over-developed muscles and an under-developed heart, it will kill me. I simply couldn't bear to see him married to the sort of woman who talks of equality with men and assumes a complete superiority over her husband. She would despise me as a parasite or trample on me as a worm because I love making my husband and my boy happy. Why shouldn't I make them happy? They give me all I care for most in life. Why can't these queer new creatures be content to know that women *are* superior to men in as many ways as men are superior to women? Men have logic; women have instinct. Men have almost uninterrupted health between twenty and fifty; we have highly strung nerves and—babies! When women get the vote, their huge majority at the polls will very soon give them the power of sitting in Parliament, and it will be funny when the *Première* has to retire into private life in the middle of a session because she is going to have a baby. There is only one way of securing the actual equality of men and women, and that is by the interchangeability of sex—which is impossible. If a man could take it in turns with his wife to have the babies they would soon be equal, and, incidentally, there would be such a falling off in the population of these overcrowded islands that there would be room to breathe and grow, for few men are as brave in sickness as women, and there would seldom be more than three children in any family.

Then if one could only ensure the successful rearing of a reasonable surplus of male babies no woman of the next generation need be deprived of what nearly every one of them in her heart needs—a husband. I fancy it is the impossibility of marriage for all that makes many women declare they hate men. I won't call this 'sour grapes,' but pride. If I had my way it should be counted as bigamy for any woman in the British Islands to marry twice. But then men do so like marrying widows. I suppose they say to themselves in their logical, imaginative way, 'This is obviously a marriageable person, as she has been married already, and has naturally learnt something of the duties and disillusionments of married life. Muddy boots, strong cigars, and rumpled chair-covers will not distress her unduly. I should not have to train her.' This seems reasonable, but they forget that women have tenacious memories, and the possession of a late husband, however inferior in actual fact to the present holder of the title, is as good as a pocketful of stones. Only widowers, therefore, should

be permitted to marry widows. I myself could never marry again, because I should be sure to call my second husband by my first husband's Christian name (you know how I call all my maids 'Simpson' because Simpson was my first), and I have sufficient delicacy to find the idea revolting.

To return to daughters. You have at least the comfort of knowing that Sylvia can never *look* otherwise than feminine. She is hopelessly graceful, hopelessly *soignée*, hopelessly elegant, and if only she could fall in love seriously (and unsuccessfully), the discovery of a heart might be followed by the discovery of a soul.

The Grange is being aired, and is now shaking out its sun-blinds, and you'll find me at the Manor as soon as ever I have said how d'ye do to the roses on the 5th.

Yours always

KATHARINE.

Humphrey Hamilton in Hillshire to Sylvia Jarvis in Downshire.

August 11, 1914

DEAR SYLVIA,—I've been too rushed to get down to Chalkleigh to say good-bye, and we're rounded up now for the start. Perhaps it's just as well, but it seems rotten luck. What I wanted to say might only have got your back up. You've never given me a chance to tell you in so many words that I want to marry you; but I think you must know, because you are so beastly clever. You always made me feel a fool when I was getting up steam, and then, of course, I knew you'd turn me down, so I funk'd it. In books they say girls are often like that when they really care. Perhaps there's some truth in it. I hope so. Whether you do care, or whether you don't, Sylvia, send me one line, and if we've gone it will be forwarded. If it's 'yes,' I'll be sure to come back alive. If it's 'no,' I hope I'll get killed as soon as we've got the Germans on the run. Life's no use to me without you; but I must help to lick the Kaiser first.¹

Yours

H. H.

¹ Sylvia never answered this letter.

Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire to Mrs. Hamilton in London.

August 29, 1916.

MY DEAR KATHARINE,—I suppose you will stay on indefinitely in town as Kenneth is a censor—I shall miss you dreadfully. The war seems to have taken Sylvia further away from me than ever. She *laughed* when I told her her father had enlisted, and said 'Poor old Dad! How uncomfy he will be! Fancy being a private soldier after being a private gentleman for forty-three years!' Not a word of praise for him or sympathy for me. It hurts me more than all the indifference she has shown towards us ever since she left school two years ago. I thought myself so wise and so enlightened when I sent her to Miss Carton's, so sure was I that her 'little Princess' ways would be just pleasantly modified by contact with other girls. It's hard to bring up an only child to be unselfish. I knew school life could not make her either rough or untidy, as I admit it makes some girls nowadays, but she is more aloof, more of a sprite than ever now, when I could love the very clumsiest and untidiest daughter with a heart for her country and her father.

John is drilling on the Plain. He feels the heat, poor dear—you know he always puts on weight after the hunting is over—and I daren't say so to Sylvia, for she would only talk about 'too solid flesh' melting, in the maddening clever schoolgirl way I detest. Oh, that cheap cleverness! My dear, simple John mistakes it for genius, and Sylvia, I am sure, would agree with him. It may be disloyal to criticise the child even to you from whom I have no secrets, but you are so kind that perhaps you can find something comforting to say. I'm so utterly alone—worse than alone—just now.

Yours

MARY.

Mrs. Hamilton in London to Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire.

August 31, 1914.

MY DEAR MARY,—I should like to run down and *shake* Sylvia, but she would only think me mad. Well, if the war lasts long enough, the dissatisfied daughters as well as the crazy females who 'devour widows' houses' with fire and bait Cabinet ministers will come to their senses. No one will have time to bother about their discontent

and their craziness, and they detest neglect or obscurity. Better good works than insignificance. Suffragettes will certainly want to prove how valuable they are as a national asset, how generous in burying their hatchets and hammers and hat-pins and wearing their nails short 'for the period of the war.' And when the war is over the worst of them will come forward and claim the vote as their reward for doing the plain duty the rest of us perform *gratis*.

I never felt sure that Miss Carton's was the right school for any girl. It was one of those where the virus of sex-hatred, disguised as jam, was spread on the pupils' bread and butter, and a good many of them, girls hitherto happy and unsuspecting, were infected with a horror of MAN. Heaven knows how far-reaching the results might have been if war had not come to knock the bottom out of the female *v.* male campaign. A good many of these foolish women are beginning to discover that a world without men would be, not a Utopia, but an Inferno. The men they had lashed themselves into loathing and despising became worthy of their admiration the moment they put on khaki. And now that they are returning wounded or maimed in the fight for 'the safety, honour, and welfare of our Sovereign and his Dominions' (and, incidentally, of the very women who had vilified them a month before), they have hurriedly graduated from brutes to benefactors, heroes and demi-gods; and I predict that there'll be an autumn catch-crop of naval and military marriages that will overflow the first column of the *Times*.

We both think it fine of John to have enlisted. The life must be utterly distasteful to him after such a peaceful and well-ordered existence.

Cheer up! If a bad illness will sometimes revolutionise and purify a person's constitution, so big a thing as war may shake Sylvia up and rearrange her moral and mental mechanism. I believe all the necessary parts are there, but they aren't in proper sequence or proportion.

Yours

KATHARINE.

Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire to Mrs. Hamilton in London.

October 4, 1914.

MY DEAR KATHARINE,—A very remarkable thing has happened. Sylvia came to me a few days ago to tell me that two old school-fellows of hers working at the G.W.W. bureau in Kenswater had

written to ask her to join them in town. They want another helper in the telephone room. 'So I am going,' announced Sylvia. 'But, my dear, I don't know anything about them,' I objected. 'And where will you live, and who will look after you?' 'They're old Winterhaysians, mother; surely that's good enough—and what's to prevent my looking after myself? In war-time—you are always telling me things are different in war-time—I needn't have a chaperon or a maid tied to my apron-string.' 'I could take a flat in town,' I said rather feebly, feeling that to be tied to Sylvia's apron-string might be trying. 'Oh, mother, *can't* you understand? I don't want to be watched over and arranged for. It seems as if I were to get a chance of living my own life at last, and now you want to be a perfect hen as usual. I thought you'd be glad I wanted to be useful.' This was rather a facer, but it came to me suddenly that it would really be better for the child to do something more sensible than reading Bernard Shaw and painting post-impressionist smears in the old school-room, so I said 'Very well. If I am satisfied that you are to be decently housed and fed, and not overworked, I will let you have your way.'

Yesterday I went up to town with Sylvia, saw the office and the boarding-house (all oilcloth and fancy table-napkin rings—clean but *awful*) where she is to put up with the two girls she knows. I thought them unprepossessing young women of the type you dislike, and, my *dear*, they called one another by their surnames! It really annoyed me to hear Sylvia called 'Jarvis'—Sylvia of all people! Then, worse still, the 'Commandant' struck a match on the leg, I can only call it that, of her ultra-tight skirt and said 'Damn!' when the head broke off and burnt a hole in it. I was glad it burnt a hole in her skirt, and wondered the Damn didn't burn a hole in her tongue.

Sylvia went off this morning and said good-bye so gladly that I sat down and cried as soon as the car was out of sight.

Yours

MARY.

Mrs. Hamilton in London to Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire.

October 6, 1914.

Why, my dear Mary, that place Sylvia has gone to in Kensington is a perfect nest of militant suffragettes! They *may* work better than ordinary tame women, but I doubt it. A silly creature

I met the other day was talking about the G.W.W. She said 'I could kiss their *feet*; they are so *noble*.' I wanted to hear more, for the nobility of their feet amused me, but just then the young woman's Pekinese puppy got entangled in her rope of pearls, and she was too deeply engaged in extricating him to give me any more of her attention. I don't believe Sylvia will stay long, so don't cry any more.

Yours
K.

Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire to Mrs. Hamilton in London.

October 9, 1914.

MY DEAR KATHARINE,—You are right—Sylvia did not like being a telephone girl, and has come home to-day. The 'Commandant' swore at her for being late one wet morning when all the 'buses were crowded, so she resigned her post. She has already sent in her name to the Secretary of the V.A.D.! How she will get on as a probationer I cannot imagine, for V.A.D. girls have a pretty bad time in some hospitals, and Sylvia is far from meek.

MARY.

Mrs. Hamilton in London to Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire.

October 30, 1914.

MY DEAR,—Humphrey has been wounded, severely, not dangerously, and as soon as ever he can be moved he will be sent over. Kenneth had the official notice first, but I got a few lines from the boy himself just now. It was a bullet wound through the lung, and he is doing well.

Yours
KATHARINE.

Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire to Mrs. Hamilton in London.

October 31, 1914.

DEAREST KATHARINE,—How dreadful for you! but I believe the waiting till you have Humphrey safe in town will be the worst part. He has such a strong constitution and such a cheery disposition.

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position that he will get well quickly. One of his lungs is as good as a pair of most people's. . . . Sylvia left for Blacktown, where she is to train, just before your letter came. I will write and tell her about Humphrey. Perhaps she will be glad to come home some day if Blacktown is the sort of place I imagine a great industrial centre in Woldshire to be.

Sometimes I feel as if I could not stand the emptiness of this big house much longer, but I manage to see John outside the camp once a week, and that helps. He looks well, very thin for him, but in good hard condition. He isn't at all happy, poor dear, for he isn't elastic-minded enough to accept the strange conditions of his present life easily. He hears his battalion is to be sent to Northshire soon. In that case I shall go up there, for it is something to be within reach of one another, and in a place where nobody knows us I think he will feel less awkward than he does here. There is no humour in the present situation for him. At the front he would feel useful and inconspicuous. Here he is conscious all the time that his contemporaries in these parts think him quixotic and just a little ridiculous.

When Humphrey arrives please send me a post card to say how he stood the journey. Of course you are brave; you have so much fighting blood, but, if you should really want me, wire, and I'll go and spend a week with you.

Yours ever

MARY.

Sylvia Jarvis at Blacktown to Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire.

November 10, 1914.

DEAR MOTHER,—This is a beastly place, but when I'm not on duty I'm chiefly in bed. Will you send me those hideous strong slippers with low heels I used to wear after I sprained my ankle, and, please, a very big box of *marrons glacés*? The food is plentiful and disgusting, and, of course, it's against the rules to smoke. The streets are filthy and crowded with smudgy people, and when I am forced by the rules to go out I walk in the dreary suburbs. I have never reached the country—if there is any—yet, and I actually pine for the clean, dull Downs. Don't tell Dad, or he would expect me to take long walks with him when he has given up playing at soldiers. He must be pretty well fed up with it by this time. I mean to stick this training business

as long as I can, for there is something about hospital work I like, but most of the ward sisters lead us probationers a dog's life. Mine is fairly decent so far. Ta-ta.

Yours

SYLVIA.

P.S.—Bad luck for Humphrey, but he is such a bovine old thing he is sure to be a good patient, and his mother will love fussing over him.

Mrs. Hamilton in London to Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire.

December 15, 1914.

MY DEAR MARY,—Your visit wasn't half long enough—indeed I can't believe you were here a week. K. and I miss you badly, and Humphrey was quite pettish when I went into his room at breakfast time this morning and told him you had rushed home by the 8.50 so as to make a triumphal arch or scrub the dogs in honour of John's first home-coming. 'I hope she'll come back,' he said. 'I never noticed before how pretty she was. She's rather like Sylvia. Was she ever as pretty?' I said you were far prettier, because you were always so gay and natural—'Oh, well, Mum, perhaps it was natural for her to be gay. You see, Sylvia's tremendously clever, and clever people aren't so easily amused or pleased, are they?' It's funny that both John and Humphrey regard Sylvia as 'tremendously clever.' It's their modesty, I suppose. Love from us all to you both. I can imagine John in the gun-room smothered in dogs and smoking a dreadful old pipe, and you close by with the firelight flickering on your dear face and peace in your heart.

Your loving

KATHARINE.

Mrs. Jarvis at Newcastle to Mrs. Hamilton in London.

April 10, 1915.

MY DEAR KATHARINE,—John's regiment is likely to be here for endless ages, so he has volunteered for service abroad in the Hillshire Fusiliers—the battalion that is here now. There are all sorts of rumours floating about, but I *think* he goes to the Mediterranean. He has been so restless lately that I am almost

glad he is going out, and yet 'my heart is like water.' I want to get him heaps of useful things, but he is only a corporal, and a corporal has nowhere to put extras. However, I am having a miniature done for him, and I'll send him weekly parcels full of comforts once he gets to—wherever it is. I have wired to Sylvia's Commandant to ask her to give the child leave to run up and see her father before he starts; it is only a two hours' journey. John's new regiment is confined to barracks now.

Yours always

MARY.

P.S.—A wire from Sylvia to say she cannot possibly get away, and I can't help wondering if she tried to. I shall hate telling John. I forgot to say how glad I am Humphrey has been passed fit for service at the front, but it is hard to congratulate *you*.

Corporal John Jarvis, Gallipoli, to Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire.

June 7, 1915.

MY DARLING MARY,—I have had one letter from you so far. There must be a big bundle hung up somewhere.

Katharine has plenty of pluck, but its hard for her to let Humphrey go out again. I am glad in a way we have no sons. I'm willing to do all the fighting for the family and if I get knocked on the head no one will be a penny the worse except you Mary for you have never seemed to notice what a dull old farmer I am. Sometimes I shut my eyes and try to see the Downs the coulours they are in June with the little white clouds making shaddows on them, but I can't fancy I smell the wild time. There are lots of smells here but none of them are nice. Even if the censer would pass it theres no use trying to discribe whats going on here and anyway I only know my own little bit. The flies are worse than the fighting. I'm glad I got my wait down before I came out and that I'm quite fit. I wonder if Janus and Jane have forgotten me. Pat Jupiter for me—He's such a knowing old beast heel understand if you just say *from Master*. And give kind mesages to everybody. Dear Mary I am rather homesick sometimes but I don't reggret anything. I coulndnt *not* have joined and you never tryed to keep me, bless you. Try and get more of the Chalkleigh men to join. I'm dissappointed in

the farmers its all bosh about girls not being able to milk. Does Syl ever ask about me. Of course she is to bussy to write so don't let her think I notice she dosent.

Your loving old

JOHN.

Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire to Sylvia at Blacktown.

June 20, 1915.

MY DEAR CHILD,—Do write just a few lines to your father. He is quite well, but I think rather depressed, and he would value a letter from you so much. I enclose one of the printed envelopes I always use when writing to him.

Your loving

MOTHER.

Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire to Corporal Jarvis at Gallipoli.

June 20.

MY DEAR OLD JOHN,—I shall post a letter every day, so that you may get plenty, even if they do reach you in bundles and some not at all. . . . I believe Sylvia *really* cares for Humphrey. I do wish she had seen him when he was at home. He has quite *grown up* and dropped his schoolboy ways and is a very fine fellow and, I am told, an excellent officer. He told me when I was in town in December that he had asked Sylvia to marry him a couple of days before he went to the front, but she never answered his letter. Well, when she was on leave the other day she asked quite a lot of questions about him and then pretended she wasn't interested in the answers, and one day I found her petting that old setter of his, Drake, that I am keeping for him as the caretaker at the Grange didn't give him enough exercise, and, John, I am *quite certain* she had been crying, but I was afraid to say anything because she would have been furious if she thought I had noticed. I don't believe she has cried for years. Perhaps her hospital work has broken up the ice in her heart. . . . Here is a bit of thyme off the Downs. I'll put a sprig or two in every letter till the lavender is in bloom, and then you shall have that instead. Jupiter did understand when I said 'From Master,' for he went and snuffed and scratched at the gun-room door and whined till I couldn't bear it.

I wonder if you have seen Humphrey yet—to speak to, I mean. It is odd that you should be in the battalion he was transferred to. He may feel awkward at first about your being in the ranks, but he is such a sensible boy that after your first meeting it will be all right, and he will contrive to see you when and where military rank doesn't count.

Those little Scotch firs you thought were in too dry a place are looking quite cheerful in spite of a nearly rainless spring. They must have got their roots into good soil. The spruces on the ridge are doing famously, but spruces are so easily pleased. You used to laugh at me and my hens, but they have laid 4000 eggs in ten weeks, more than half of which went to military hospitals. No one seems to have discovered a breed that will lay at a time when ordinary hens stop. Perhaps Australian hens would fill the gap if they were sufficiently homesick to stick to their old habits after being imported, but I don't know how to set about importing them.

Your loving

MARY.

Sylvia Jarvis at Blacktown to Corporal John Jarvis at Gallipoli.

July 3, 1915.

DEAR DAD,—You seem to be having a rotten time at Gallipoli, judging by the papers. I don't get much time to read them, for we are kept pretty busy, and when the hospital isn't full the management invents tasks for the V.A.D.s instead of giving us longer outings. I like most of the work, and I made up my mind in January that I'd stick it. Our Commandant is a very decent old body, but one ward sister (professional) I was under was the limit. She used to wake the patients up in the middle of the night to ask if they wanted anything, and I can tell you it took a bit of doing to keep my temper. I had to, for I was her probationer, but to see her going round the two wards of forty beds each disturbing the poor Tommies made me simply rage.

Do you ever see Humphrey, or is he too great a man to condescend to converse with a corporal? Bar chaff, Dad, I think it was ripping of you to go into the ranks, and I'm sorry I jeered. I think I wanted whipping when I was a kid, but I suppose parents never whip 'onlies.' I am getting all my whippings now, so you and mother are being avenged, and I think the treatment is peeling

off some of my tough little hide—that and nursing these plucky Tommies; but I've no doubt I shall be wicked again when the war is over and we're all doddering along again in the old way at Chalkleigh. Buck up, Dad, and get your sergeant's stripe.

Your affectionate

SYLVIA.

Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire to Mrs. Hamilton in London.

July 15, 1915.

KATHARINE,—John was killed on the 12th. That is all I know. He'll never see the Downs again, nor his horses and dogs and the new plantations, and he loved them all so and hated being a soldier. I suppose I shall be able some day to think of him as free and happy where there are no troubles and disappointments—but not yet. He was so happy here, and we were such friends, and I can't think how he is going to get on without me.

MARY.

Captain Humphrey Hamilton at Gallipoli to Mrs. Jarvis in Downshire.

July 14, 1915.

DEAR MRS. JARVIS,—This is a very hard letter to write, and perhaps when you have read it you will never want to see me again. I got Mr. Jarvis transferred to my company because I thought it would make things a little easier for him. He never quite got used to the men's ways, and there wasn't anyone in his company he could make a pal of, whereas there were several gentlemen in mine. You will have seen about the attack by combined British and French at Helles. It was in that. He was quite close to me when I was knocked out of time by the concussion of a shell in a rush on the enemy's trenches. I was only stunned, but I should have been left lying there but for him. A man who saw it all tells me Mr. Jarvis went back from the captured Turkish trench, after the position had been consolidated, along with a private who had volunteered to go with him, and they set to work to get me into safety. How they did it I don't know, for I'm nearly twelve stone and was a dead weight. But somehow they got me away from what had been No Man's Land and

under cover, but just as we were coming round a traverse into the bay a bit of shrapnel got him and missed me and the private. When I came to myself Mr. Jarvis and I were lying side by side in the trench, and of course I didn't know what had happened, or that he had saved my life. I could see he was awfully bad, but he was conscious and seemed to be watching me, waiting for me to come to, I suppose, for they had found out I was only stunned. He just managed to say 'Marry Sylvia. . . . Love to Mary,' and then his eyes closed. I think he had *made* himself live till he could speak to me, and then let himself go.

We had had one or two chances of a talk since he came to my company, which was only the other day, and I can't imagine what made him say that about Sylvia, for it had been always about you and Chalkleigh that we talked before. I wish I thought I had a dog's chance of marrying her, but it seemed rather final her never answering that letter of mine.

It's no use my trying to tell you what I feel about Mr. Jarvis. His life was so much more valuable than mine. Don't think I don't know that. And he'd always been such a brick to me. Do you remember, he gave me my first dog—Pincher—when I was six, and when Pincher died he gave me the grey pony that's white now and mows the lawn.

Your affectionate

HUMPHREY.

The letter I enclose was in his pocket. I am sending you the few little things you will care to have, but your miniature was broken and spoilt. I had it buried with him. I thought you would both like that best.

*From Sylvia Jarvis in Downshire to Captain Humphrey Hamilton
at Gallipoli.*

August 3, 1915.

DEAR OLD HUMPHREY,—Mother showed me your letter, and she told me you had told her you wanted to marry me. I have been a perfect beast to all the people who have cared most for me—Dad and Mother and you. I don't deserve anything good to happen to me, only I am afraid it would be punishing you as well as myself if I said I wouldn't marry you, and I don't want to hurt

anybody any more. When I think that the only decent letter I ever wrote Dad never reached him— Oh, Humphrey, do you think there is a post in heaven, and that *too late* letters like mine are delivered ?

I know mother is writing to you herself, but she will like me to tell you what she said to me yesterday : ' I am glad your father died like that. No other death could be so fine. He gave his life for Humphrey's.' So you see, dear, your life is poor Dad's wedding present to me.

In the letter you found in his pocket he said he was so glad to hear what mother had somehow guessed—I mean that I *really* cared for you. His exact words were ' It will be bad luck if the boy is killed. I'll keep an eye on him as well as I can for Syl's sake, but it isn't likely I'll get the chance to be of use.'

Your mother, who is here, said to me just now, ' So long as you care for Humphrey as much as he does for you, *and will let him know it*, you and I will never quarrel.' This letter is to let you know it. All the barbed wire is down, and I am for ever and ever

Yours

SYLVIA.

SOME RIVERS.

I WOULD claim of anglers, as of poets, that they are born and not made. True, even as there is a large number of writers of verse at whose nativity the Muses can hardly be said to have assisted, so there are many worthy people who extend a polite patronage to fishing; but they are mere *dilettanti*, who only do so for lack of opportunity of indulgence in some more congenial amusement—shooting, golf, or even bridge. For fishing may be dubbed the Cinderella or Ugly Duckling of field sports. It has none of the glitter of the hunting-field or racecourse. It is the contemplative man's recreation, and, as such, to be enjoyed in perfection, should be practised alone; while the rewards it offers to its followers are, alas! but too often strangely incommensurate with the devotion it exacts from them.

An inherent love of sport, unless encouraged by early environment or training, often remains undeveloped, except in the case of mountaineering or fishing; but the man who has an intrinsic passion for either of these will, whatever his surroundings or circumstances, inevitably find his way to hill or river, even if the former be no loftier eminence than Snowdon, or the latter a no more romantic stream than the Lea. Nor do I speak without authority, for my early childhood was spent in an arid neighbourhood, where even the proverbial stickleback was lacking; nor was mine a family of anglers; yet I cannot recollect the time when fishing was not paramount in my thoughts and aspirations, nor when I did not eagerly devour any literature relating to it that came in my way;—I am positive I could have repeated pages of 'The Compleat Angler' from memory before I was ten years old. I used even to save up my pocket-money for the purchase of fishing tackle, which as yet I had no opportunity of using; and as this was a commodity not procurable in my native village, I had to defer my shopping to one of my rare visits to London, when it was my invariable custom to patronise the emporium of The Golden Perch, in Oxford Street. I wonder if this still exists, or if the iconoclastic hand of Transatlantic enterprise has swept it away, for I seem to recollect it standing somewhere in the neighbourhood of Selfridge's massive pile. I presume it was the name that attracted me to it, for, to the juvenile angler, the perch is the king of fishes, and a gilt presentment of one of

these noble creatures dangled above its door. In memory, I can still see myself treading the pavement of Oxford Street, outwardly calm, but inwardly a prey to intense emotion, one little fist clasped in Nurse's hand, the other tightly grasping a pile of sticky copper in my knickerbockers pocket. Arrived at the shop, the procedure was always the same, for I had long ago decided how best to invest my modest capital according to the fixed prices of the Golden Perch, and, depositing my money on the counter, I would hurriedly falter out my list of requirements: 'Six hooks, a float, some split shot, a line,' and so forth. I remember the awe with which I used to regard the shopman who wrapped up my order, and how I longed to ask him for some hints on perch-fishing, of which art I felt positive he was a past master; but Nurse, who had no sympathy with angling, having once trodden on one of my 'narsty fish-hooks in 'er stockin' feet,' brooked no unnecessary delay, and would give the signal for departure before I could summon up courage to speak.

Ay de mi! but all this happened long ago. I must apologise to my readers for such senile digressions.

There is one attribute of all good anglers which never fails to assert itself as spring comes timidly round: a sudden flush of memory bringing with it an overpowering desire to go a-fishing. Usually no ostensible reason can be assigned for this. It is not necessarily the result of that premature spring day which always appears before winter has departed, nor the sight of budding plane-trees in a London Square, nor even of great silvery fish shining amid ice on a slab in Bond Street. All these phenomena, though I admit that any one of them may produce the effect in question, will pass unnoticed, and then, without warning, there comes into the angler's blood a feeling of unrest and impatience, for which there is only one panacea. It may come in the most unexpected and incongruous places: in church, in the stalls of a theatre, on the Terrace at Monte Carlo; but come it inevitably will, bringing with it memories of hill-girt lochs rippling before the westerly breeze, of noble snow-fed rivers flowing full and strong from foss to fjord, of placid water-meadows backed by St. Catherine's Hill and Winchester Towers, of peat-stained, foam-flecked streams fining down after spate, where 'the sea-trout's jumping crazy for the fly.'

It has come to me this year in the seclusion of a nursing home, and the admirable prospect of the chimney-pots of Harley Street afforded by my bedroom window has more than once resolved itself into some such mind-picture as the above, and the cease-

less roar of London changed for the moment to the 'laughing water' of a once familiar trout stream.

All my early recollections of fishing are centred in the Dorsetshire Stour—a lovely stream of clear water running deep and strong over a gravelly bottom, between banks covered with flowers to an extent I have never seen on any other English river. It is not well known, being very strictly preserved—more on account of its wild-fowling than its angling, though I believe it shares with its equally beautiful elder sister, the Avon, the reputation of being the 'fishiest' river in England. A few salmon go up it in the early spring, and it contains an occasional trout, for I once caught one of them; but I have never met its equal for coarse fish, of which I once killed eight different varieties in a single day's fishing. Moreover, the clearness of its water afforded the juvenile angler the supreme gratification of actually seeing his quarry, and being able to carefully dangle his bait exactly in front of its nose—a manœuvre which, as may be imagined, usually resulted in disappointment, yet which never lost its charm. But the pike, which could also be seen no less clearly than the roach or perch, were a source of much misgiving to my childish imagination, which had been grievously excited by the anecdotes of the ferocity of this fish to be found within the pages of my copy of 'The Compleat Angler'; and especially of the monster which dragged the parish-clerk of Sillishall into the water 'and would doubtless have devoured him also had he not by wonderful agility and dexterous swimming escaped the dreadful jaws of this voracious monster.' For, having advanced cautiously to the river-edge to cast my wriggling bait into its depths, I would sometimes become aware of a long, grim shape, lying motionless in the stream, and I would pause, half fascinated, yet with a strong inclination to take to my heels. Then, after a severe mental struggle between pride and pusillanimity, I would hurl a stone at the pike, which would flash away to the nearest reed-bed, leaving a little trail of bubbles and mud behind it. But I could still imagine it lying there, watching me out of its cruel eyes, and I used to move away also—to this day a pike has something of the repulsion of a snake for me. None the less, I have never seen any pike to equal those of the Stour, either in beauty of colouring or fighting qualities; and, in after years, when I came to fish for them, I have known a ten- or twelve-pounder hooked on light tackle, in a strong stream, put up as good a fight as many an autumn salmon of equal weight—and, properly cooked, be far more palatable food.

There was one variety of Stour fish with which I frankly confess I never succeeded in getting on terms of equality, and that was its gigantic chub; indeed, only once did I ever succeed in hooking one. I was fly-fishing for dace with a nine-foot rod and drawn gut, and, becoming aware of a brace of huge chub—I am positive neither of them weighed less than five pounds—I managed, thanks to a screen of sedges, to present a fly to them unseen. One of them took it without hesitation, and, simultaneously, with a fury that no sea-trout ever excelled, it tore the line off my screaming reel, dashed across the river, and dived under an overhanging bank, whence the remains of my cast came dangling back into my face. I have since been informed, by a friend more versed in chub-fishing than myself, that, if I had checked that first furious rush, the chub would have chucked up the sponge at once; but that is one of those incidents of warfare, such as Grouchy's failure to turn up at Waterloo, which must ever remain a matter for conjecture.

For lack of opportunity, I did not become a fly-fisherman until comparatively late in life, when, being intended to adorn the profession of arms, I was sent to the famous 'cramming' establishment at Freiburg in Baden, then carried on by dear old Colonel R—, himself a keen and skilful angler, equally ready to instruct his pupils in the higher mathematics, or the art of casting a fly: the latter a piece of unselfishness, I fear, he must at times have had reason to regret. The fishing at Freiburg in those days was really very good, and particularly so in the Dreisam, which flows through the pleasant little town, and was full of well-fed, and happily not too sophisticated, trout. Still, to fish it, it was rather an expensive luxury for youthful pockets, which had so many other pressing demands of early manhood to meet.—I think a ticket for the season cost a fiver, and, moreover, it was not a very interesting stream, as, for a considerable distance above and below the town, its course was more or less artificial. Consequently, though the fish were neither so plentiful nor so large, I am inclined to think we used to have our best fun on the Elz—a charming, wilder stream, a few miles from Freiburg. Here, on payment of a shilling a day, we could fish a large extent of water belonging to the inn at the Suggenthal, where, in addition, for a very slightly larger outlay, we could dine like young turkey-cocks on veal cutlets and asparagus, topped up with strawberries and cream, and washed down with excellent country wine. After which, if the weather were too bright for fishing, we used to encourage an evening rise of trout by bathing

in the deeper pools ! As I write these lines, I wonder what has become of all that band of light-hearted boys ? Some, I know, are resting beneath the African veldt, or among the hills of the North-West Frontier ; L——, the best fisherman among us, was shot in a 'bush-whacking' expedition in West Africa ; one, at least, rules over hundreds of square miles of Indian jungle, where I have little doubt he makes matters warm for the mahseer ; one or two, grey in war and old of counsel, are facing the Germans in Flanders, and the rest of us, I suspect, are wishing we could do the same. Of late, Freiburg has acquired notoriety as being apparently the favourite dumping-ground of French aviators ; but it was a pleasant little *Landstadt*, and the surrounding Black Forest a magnificent playground, 'when all the world was young.' However, I suspect it will be many a year before Englishmen cast fly on its streams again.

Of all the rivers in which I have fished for trout, I can recall none to equal one of northern Sweden, which, born in the glaciers of a remote peak, locally credited as unascended save by a traditional and probably mythical Lapp, flowed through many a league of barren fjeld and trackless forest, before it finally found its way into the head-waters of the Gulf of Bothnia. It drained hundreds of square miles of country, it was the parent of great lakes, and the only two of its many waterfalls that I was privileged to see would have made the fortune of any Swiss hotel. The elk and the bear, the wolf and the glutton, drank of its waters, the weird cry of the loon echoed down its reaches, and the osprey and otter took unchallenged toll of its trout. And what trout they were ! Nowhere have I seen fish to equal them, either in beauty of colouring or weight, or edible quality—their flesh was as firm, as flaky, and as red as that of any fresh-run salmon. The largest I ever killed personally was just over 9 lb. in weight ; but a friend, spinning with a six-inch phantom, once caught six *consecutive* fish that weighed over 90 lb.—the largest of them 19½ lb.—all genuine brown trout, yellow of belly and spotted like very peacocks ! I do not, of course, mean to imply that such captures were of every-day occurrence—far from it ; and these monsters only fell victims to spinning-baits ; probably the average weight of the trout killed on the fly was about a pound—the heaviest ever obtained thus was a six-pounder ; but I have a note in my game-book of a short day's fishing with fly only, when two of us, rejecting innumerable smaller fish, killed fifty-six trout that weighed 70 lb.—sport that I have never seen since, and can never hope to see again ; while I

cannot recall a trout, large or small, taken out of that river, that was not in the perfection of shape, colouring, or condition. It has always been a marvel to me where the supply of fish-food comes from in these northern rivers, whether of Europe or America, that are ice-bound for months, and which drain barren, inhospitable territories, but which contain almost invariably trout that are fat, well-flavoured, and pink of flesh; while those of English or Scotch streams, flowing through fertile farm lands, are, as a rule, the reverse. Personally, I am inclined to attribute the latter state of affairs to the drainage system of the more cultivated countries, where the rainfall, caught up by the open 'grips' of the moorlands and the pipe drainage of the low country, is hurried out to sea in a succession of raging floods, that bear with them all the available fish-food that Nature has been storing up.

Our river did not yield trout only; its quieter reach held great store of char—beautiful rose-coloured fish, running up to 3 lb. and 4 lb. in weight, and as delicious to eat as they were lovely in appearance. •

There is no period of my life as an angler—and I think that, of all sports, angling has afforded me the greatest gratification—to which I can look back with such unalloyed pleasure of memory as the two seasons I spent on that noble Swedish river. *Imprimis*, my companion on each occasion was the best-beloved friend I have ever had. We had a delightful wooden house 'all to ourselves,' with a great open fireplace, where birch and pine logs used to crackle cheerfully in the chillier evenings of early autumn, and we held the sporting rights over miles of river and lake, and leagues of forest and mountain, unhampered by factor, or landlord, or gamekeeper. Neighbours—or, at all events, sporting ones—there were none. In a good game season—such as occasionally happens in Scandinavia (and we chanced on one)—the rough shooting was really first rate; we used to get quite respectable bags of ptarmigan and ryper on the higher ground, and of capercailzie, black game, and gelinotte in the forest. Nay, on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, I successfully stalked and slew a bull elk within two miles of the house!—but that is another story.

I wonder how many of the anglers who annually flock to Tweed, or Dee, or Spey, by the East Coast route, know, as they clank slowly over the great High-Level Bridge into Newcastle Station, that the foul river beneath them is, in its higher reaches, one of the most prolific and beautiful of English salmon rivers? Yet such is the

case, hard as it seems of belief when one looks down on the turbid, yellow stream, streaked with patches of iridescent scum, with both banks covered thick for miles with grimy towns and manufactories and coalpits, all of which utilise it as a natural and Heaven-sent sewer—it would seem impossible for animal life to exist in such liquid corruption. But the salmon know better, and, with a spate, they come surging up with the flood tide, past the shipyards and the chemical works, rolling under the bows of the tramp steamers and the Norwegian sailing-brigs at anchor in the stream, past the wharves and the coal-staithes, and the great ordnance works, until they reach the sweet moorland water and the gravelly spawning-beds above Hexham.

The Tyne, as seen by the traveller at Newcastle, is formed by the junction at Hexham of two streams : the North and South Tynes—the latter of little account from an angling point of view ; the former, one of the most beautiful and sporting rivers it has ever been my lot to fish. The coalpits and the manufactories have long been left behind, and the river runs pure and undefiled through scenery of the most varied beauty, that has been as perfectly described by Charles Kingsley as though he had been born and bred on its banks :

‘ A full hundred yards broad it was, sliding on from broad pool to broad shallow, and broad shallow to broad pool, over great fields of shingle, under oak and ash coverts, past low cliffs of sandstone, past green meadows and fair parks and a great house of grey stone and brown moors above.’

Moreover, the wild district through which it flows is historic—Roman and Dane and Briton and Scot have all held, or disputed, it ; and from the days when Hadrian’s legion garrisoned the Wall, down to those of the ’45—ay, and later—it has been the scene of many—

‘ A midnight raid and morning fight
By grey peel, cairn, and stream,
Till fancy hears the slogan wild
And sees the bright steel gleam.’

Here can be found the farm whence sprang ‘ auld Pepper and auld Mustard, and little Pepper and little Mustard,’ whose descendants still fear nothing ‘ wi’ a hairy skin on’t ’ ; there is the house where occurred the tragedy of the ‘ Long Pack,’ yonder hill is called ‘ the

Earl's Seat,' because, according to local tradition, it is the identical spot where the ill-fated Derwentwater was captured in 1715; that 'great house of grey stone' is one where the spur used to be sent round when the larder was empty. Armstrongs and Charltons, Liddells and Riddells, now live in peace on the land they disputed for centuries, and even neglect to break one another's heads at Stagshawbank or Hawick Trysts. Alas! that so pleasant a country should be poisoned by the stench of the motor-car, and that its roadside cottages should have come to advertise 'accommodation for cyclists.'

There is one less agreeable feature about the North Tyne—its proneness to violent and unforeseen spates. A local thunderstorm on the Border will cause it to rise and come down the dale with incredible rapidity. No man should ever wade Tyne without first noting some conspicuous object—a dry stone, or a tuft of grass by the water's edge—by which to mark a possible rise of the water; it would go hard with an angler caught in mid-stream by a Tyne 'fresh.' I myself can recall, on a day of glowing August drought, when the river was shrunk far below even the lowest fishing size, rowing across a great deep dub to take a stroll on the opposite bank: in a pair of knee-boots, I vow I could have crossed the river, in many places, dry shod. Yet I had scarcely landed a couple of minutes when I noticed a bit of stick come sailing down the current, and, simultaneously, I heard the 'lap-lapping' of freshening water among the sun-baked rocks of the river-bed. I hurried back to the boat which I had left high and dry, but which was now rocking in a rapidly deepening yeasty stream, and, though I had a bare hundred yards to row to the opposite shore, I had a hard struggle to get there, and, before I had made the boat fast, the river was running from bank to bank in a flood in which I should have been powerless. Yet all this time the sky had remained blue and unclouded, and there had been no indication of the spate. The river cleared and became fishable on the following afternoon, and, in a couple of hours, I killed six fish of the aggregate weight of 90 lb.!

Dear North Tyne! in thee I killed my first salmon and my first three-pound trout. May the destroying hand of utilitarian manufacture long be averted from thy sylvan banks!

There is yet another Tyne—even less known to anglers than its Northumbrian namesake, on which, in former years, I have spent some happy days—which drains the fertile East Lothian campaign—its one redeeming feature, as far as anglers are concerned.

It is, or was, an ideal little trout stream, the recollection of which, apart from its fishing, is stamped on my memory by two facts : one, that in the days of Snider rifles and short ranges, I narrowly escaped a violent, and, I trust, undeserved, death at the hands of the East Linton Volunteers, whose butts then adjoined the river banks ; and the other, that for the only time in my life, I here saw a wild polecat in the flesh.

Of chalk streams and their methods, I can only say *vidi tantum* ; nor am I an enthusiast respecting the latter, though I frankly admit that, never having served a proper apprenticeship to the cult of the dry fly, this is largely a case of 'sour grapes.' Still, granted the infinite skill and patience it exacts, it lacks the sporting conditions afforded by 'chuck-and-chance-it' fishing in wilder streams ; while there can be no doubt that the trout of the latter excel in fighting quality. A chalk-stream fish has but one idea of defence—the nearest weed-bed ; keep him out of that, and he should be yours. None the less, I fully concede the difficulty—nay, but too often the impossibility—of following the above excellent advice, when a lusty two-pounder has to be controlled with an 00-hook, and the finest of drawn gut. Equally do I envy the skill of the dry-fly professor, especially in view of my own helplessness, when invited to entice an extremely sophisticated trout out of about eighteen inches of almost stagnant, pellucid water, under a glowing sun. *Palmarum qui meruit ferat !* Still, I would sooner kill a pound-fish out of a rocky northern river, than one of double its weight from a chalk stream.

But putting fishing out of the question, there is an indescribable charm about these gently meandering crystal waters, and their peaceful beauty is as undeniable, in its way, as that of any of their wilder northern sisters. At one time of my life, I used to be made free of one of the best stretches of the Kennet, and my kind host generally contrived that my visit should coincide with that of the mayfly, when I used to militate, not without some glory, greatly aided by the stouter gut and larger hooks incidental to what was unflatteringly known as 'the duffer's week.' In those days the rise of the mayfly on the Kennet was a sight to remember—tens of thousands of green and grey drakes dancing in the air, or clinging with folded wings to every stalk of grass, their numbers apparently undiminished by the screaming swifts that never ceased hawking them, or by the great trout that gorged on them till their very mouths overflowed. I have seen a hatchway on the main stream of the

Kennet literally choked with a solid wall of dead and dying mayflies ; yet now I believe the fly has become practically extinct not only on that stream, but on Test and Itchen as well, and that attempts have actually been made to propagate it artificially.

Ah me ! those were happy hours spent in the peaceful Berkshire water-meadows, at the foot of the great chalk downs, when—

‘ All the land in flowery squares
Beneath a broad and equal blowing wind
Smells of the coming summer.’

It is a mistake to imagine that chalk-stream fishing is confined to Hampshire or the Home Counties : the most difficult bit of angling I was ever introduced to was on a nameless Lincolnshire beck.

The temptation is great to dally in memory by the side of many another lovely stream—by Tees and Tummel and Awe and Coquet, among Hebridean moors or Scandinavian fjelds, and the hills of the Swiss Jura ; but a too diffuse pen is as wearisome as a garrulous tongue, and I fear I have trespassed too long on my reader’s patience. I will make my apology to him by quoting from the preface to a most charming book on angling which I have just laid down with regret : ‘ But I myself have derived such great delight from what others have written about fishing that I cannot help hoping that other fishermen may get a little pleasure from reading my book.’

PERCY STEPHENS.

A PADRE IN EAST AFRICA.

WHETHER these reminiscences will ever reach the eye of a discriminating public depends in the main upon whether ink can be manufactured from permanganate of potash and water. We have long passed the region where ink in the ordinary commercial sense is procurable, the longest fountain pen has long since run dry, but permanganate of potash in neat little wooden boxes, we have, by a curious freak of fortune, almost in plenty. There are certain good ladies in East Africa who periodically send us bags of comforts. Very few, unfortunately, reach us, but a few weeks ago a small consignment did turn up, and contained besides soap, tobacco, cigarettes, and acid drops the aforementioned boxes of permanganate. It is said to be a useful remedy for sore feet; it is also a cure for snake bites. It may possibly make ink, and it looks as though it would; a little brown perhaps, but distinctly inky in appearance; but, on the other hand, it may fade if the rains catch us before we get under cover, and if it does these reminiscences fade with it.

Strictly speaking they are not reminiscences, but rather records of actualities. Looked at from another point of view they are an attempt to escape from the boredom consequent on being confined all day (in the tropics) to a dug-out and its immediate vicinity. The Germanis, as we call them here, are only a few hundred yards away as I write, machine-gun 'hates' may and do start at any moment day or night, and on such occasions it is unwise to be caught far from home.

We had long ago exhausted the last fragment of everything readable; the fruits of our deal with the Intelligence Office (a school copy of Daudet's 'Le petit Chose,' very much abbreviated, and with maddening connecting passages in German, in return for a very ancient *Royal Magazine*) has been read and re-read, and there is really nothing else to do except write reminiscences; at least nothing else for the chaplain. The other members of the mess can draw maps and quarrel about them. The chaplain by his profession is denied even that relaxation. And so he writes reminiscences; no one can blame him, for no one is actually obliged to read them.

There is plenty to reminisce about, for the war out here, though only one of the side-shows, is a very peculiar war indeed and fruitful

in unrehearsed effects. The army to begin with is peculiar; its General is a lawyer by profession and writes K.C. among the letters after his name. The troops are the last word in heterogeneity. A walk through one of the camps is a study in ethnology, or might be if any of us had time or energy to make it. In a short excursion I made lately in search of the Madras Pioneers I passed from the lines of the South African Infantry, skirted Canadian M.T. section, asked my way at the Housas (West African Native Regiment), was smothered in dust by a passing squadron of Dutch South African Horse (Z.A.R. they bear on their shoulders, it stands for Zuid Afrikaanse Ruiters), admired from a distance two enormous naval guns in charge of a section of Marines, and arrived by way of the Baluchis at my destination. Even this list far from exhausts the peculiarities of even this particular camp. There were Rhodesians across the river, also some Royal Fusiliers, and a detachment of the Loyal North Lancers. There were several detachments of the King's African Rifles (native troops whose praise is in all men's mouths), and at least half a dozen units of the Indian army; truly an Imperial force if ever there was one.

The M.T. Company whose headquarters were at Kajiado were most of them Canadians; it really looked as if the War Office had determined that the whole Empire should be represented in the East African Army. I saw a good deal of them, as many of the men were members of my flock, and on one occasion made a trip to Longido under their guidance. I must say they had a pretty stiff time, living most of the day in choking dust, and piloting huge lorries over roads with which an English ploughed field would compare favourably as a thoroughfare. They are not really roads at all, a good many of them, and differ only from the surrounding country in being free from grass and having no trees (though plenty of stumps) actually in the middle. Rivers and streams are crossed by drifts which look like mud rivers with perpendicular sides, and that a big lorry should ever get down, or having got down, should ever get up again seems incredible until you have seen it done. The importance of the work of the Motor Transport in the German East Campaign can hardly be exaggerated. It alone rendered possible the rapid advance and long flanking movements which drove the Germans south of the Central Railway in the span of a few months. When we were in camp on the Uganda river some 100 miles south of the Central Railway, and before the Central Railway was patched up and brought into use again, we were getting our

supplies by motor transport from Kerougi on the Tanga line, a distance not far short of 250 miles.

I should like to write a book of short stories about the Mechanical Transport in East Africa, and would too, if I only knew more about motor-cars and their machinery. You have to introduce technicalities for that sort of thing, and my position at the moment of writing (we are struck on a sand-bank in the Zambesi River and seem likely to remain there for the duration) renders the acquisition of the necessary knowledge impossible. But the subject is a fascinating one, and only by fiction, which every one will read, will it be possible to make people understand the heroic labours of the M.T.A.S.C. Besides, the fiction of the war (excellent for the most part, and vastly superior to its poetry) has done but scant justice to this branch of the Service, and many people must have carried away the idea that the A.S.C. is mainly occupied in purloining strawberry jam. The only exception I can remember is Mr. Boyd Cable's wonderful 'Benevolent Neutral' in 'Action Front.'

My book would put all that right. 'The Derelict' would make a capital title for one story. When a lorry breaks down and has to be left behind by the convoy its crew must stick to her until she is mended or can be towed in. A good situation alone by the roadside at night in a country crawling with lions or infested by Askari pickets. 'The Land Mines' would do for another. I have twice been within earshot of road mine explosions, though the Germans were fortunately not so well supplied with them as they were in German West. 'Cotton Soil' would make a third. The roads ran over stretches of cotton soil, soft black stuff over which the lorries had to be tenderly persuaded by bundles of reeds laid down before them and into which they often sank over the axles, and had to be unloaded and dug out. When the monument commemorating the war in German East is erected there will, of course, be representative figures of British, South African, Indian and African regiments at, I suppose, the four corners, but the whole of the pedestal should be ornamented by a frieze depicting the work of the M.T.A.S.C. For it was upon that work that the whole campaign was based. A scene rises in my memory of a solitary battered, dust-enshrouded lorry, piled high with biscuit boxes, struggling into a camp in the wilds at sunset when all hope of supplies, seeing the nature of the country behind, had well-nigh vanished. It was one of the few occasions on which I heard real cheering in East Africa.

The country too is peculiar, though its peculiarities are fre-

quently lost sight of in the fact of its enormous size. It is its size which has made the work of conquering it such a tedious and heart-breaking business. You in Europe who read of General Smuts's lightning strokes doubtless conjure up a picture of something swift and sudden, troops speeding stealthily through the darkness, forced marches of cavalry tearing across country at the gallop, and so on. But the reality is very different. The lightning strokes (and they are fully worthy of the name) are accomplished by columns of infantry crawling painfully through choking dust, hour after hour, day after day, week after week; frequently short of water, and on half or a quarter rations, often threatened by bush fires, generally separated by miles from their transport and all possibilities of comfort. What it feels like to the man in the ranks, burdened with his heavy pack and his rifle, has been stated once for all by Mr. Kipling in his Boer War poem 'Boots.' To the man on horseback (or muleback to be accurate), whose line of sight is higher, it is not boots but helmets, helmets battered out of shape by being used as pillows, helmets sagging patiently forward, beating time wearily as their owners jog painfully on.

Sometimes the line in front suggests a troop of firemen rushing, or rather crawling, to the rescue, and that is when the dust is red, as it often is, and rises on all sides in flame-coloured clouds. The throbbing line of helmets grows dim in the red mist, and the fierce heat overhead heightens the illusion of fire. Those are the red marches, only a little less terrible than the red marches of battle. For there is one thing that you must never do (I know this is a platitude, but a terrible platitude all the same), you must never touch your water-bottle, you must let the great heavy thing bump against you all day long, for if you touch it you are a lost man. We *may* get to water in the evening, but even if we do it is as likely as not in the hands of the enemy, and we shall have to 'scrap' for it. And if not in the enemy's hands it will probably be a dried-up water-course fringed by beautiful fresh green trees, and containing everything a river should but water. To get water you must dig in the river bed, dig sometimes as deep as eight feet, and then the water will only appear as a slow muddy trickle and you must wait for hours, sometimes all night, before it is deep enough to ladle out and thin enough to drink. If you have a pump of course it is a simpler and speedier operation; but then the infantry never do have a pump: it would be much too heavy to carry, and our pack mules have as much as they can manage with the machine guns and

ammunition. So it is advisable to have your water-bottle full for the evening halt, that you may not have to depend upon the river for your evening coffee (if there is any coffee). Besides, to drink in the heat of the day is fatal, as I said before. The wise men were those who secured some baobab-tree fruit, and chewed it on the way; but you must be a good shot to knock down a baobab-pod.

The red treks stand out most prominently in the memories of the last months, but there were white treks and green treks and grey treks and yellow treks, and what I may call 'Birnam Wood' treks. About the white treks there was nothing remarkable; the dust was the white dust of England, only there was more of it; it was often a foot or so deep and it rose high up and hung in clouds above the column. The green treks were the rarest and also the pleasantest. They generally meant plenty of water, and also shade enough to take your helmet off. A sun helmet of the type supplied to the army, with its heavy brass knob and protector, becomes a terrible burden when it has to be worn all day; and if you let your hair grow too long it is not only a burden but a torment. The grey treks were really rather mauve than grey, and led either through rubber plantations or through waterless mountains. The industrious German has spent enormous sums on rubber plantations; they stretch for mile after mile along the road, always the same, always symmetrically laid out and connected by paths and by-paths. The sense of order in these neatly arranged squares was so great that it would scarcely have surprised us to see a policeman standing at the corner, or to meet a nursemaid with a perambulator. Possibly such things were to be met with once, but the policeman and the perambulator have long since departed.

The yellow treks were on the whole the worst and most dangerous; fortunately they were also the least common. They led through plains of sun-dried grass, so dry and inflammable that a spark from a motor-cycle or a lighted cigarette-end was enough to start a blaze; and once started there was no stopping it until the dew came down at night. In extreme emergencies a fire-break had to be burnt, and the danger at all times, especially to the transport, was very great. The commencement of a fire was usually heralded by a puff of smoke rising above the trees like the smoke from a shell, and within a few minutes the flames would be on us, terrible flames sometimes as much as eighteen feet high. Even the most experienced and war-worn officers grew palpably uneasy at the approach of these fires, and their effect upon a new hand fresh from

England may be imagined. Even in camp there was no rest; indeed in camp the danger was greatest. In spite of most stringent regulations fires were constantly breaking out, the native boys being the worst offenders. As each man had to do his own cooking the number of camp fires was very great, and the possibility of accidents multiplied. If the grass had been soaked in paraffin it could hardly have caught on with more violence. I saw myself a fire started by a motor lorry, which within a quarter of an hour covered a line at least a mile long. It had got too far before attempts to beat it out were made. On another occasion I was within a few feet of one that started, and although at least a dozen of us were on it within a minute, beating for all we were worth with branches, it was ten minutes before we got it under. Fortunately there are no trees to speak of in this terrible country, and fortunately, too, we were fairly immune at night from sudden alarms, owing to the heavy dew. But at night the sky was often alight for miles with the glare of distant bush fires, and though we ourselves were in security, the knowledge that our transport, with its heavy waggons and long teams of mules, was somewhere out there did not add to our peace of mind. When in close touch with the thing the danger took a new and more threatening form, and on one occasion came very near to effecting a terrible disaster. But that is another story and needs a reminiscence all to itself. The analysis of the horror of a bush fire I work out as follows:

Sight 50 per cent.; more when the flames are high and leap before a following wind.

Sound 35 per cent.; there is something terribly menacing about the fierce crackle.

Heat 15 per cent.; being only grass the heat is comparatively insignificant compared with the burning sun.

So much for the yellow treks and bush fires, though I feel I have not done them justice. There is a sort of cosmic element about them, a feeling that the world has turned against you, and that all your efforts must be vain. Old hands tell us that our fires are nothing to the Australian and Canadian bush fires, and that may well be. But it must be remembered that an army on the march is in a terribly exposed position in face of such visitations.

There remain to be described the 'Birnam Wood' marches. On these occasions every soldier has torn down a bough or rather a branch, and felling that some grass, and sticks it in his helmet. This is done when the enemy are in the vicinity and the line of march

is through thick bush, as it generally is. Besides presenting a less promising target for snipers, to have your helmet well concealed is a great help in taking cover. It is impossible to remove it even for a few moments without risk of sun-stroke.

These Birnam Woods were usually rather nerve-trying performances, especially at the beginning. Sometimes the grass would be so thick and high that it would be impossible to proceed except in single file, and some such reassuring order would come down from the Colonel in front as 'Pass the word along to keep a sharp look out to the right,' the right presenting at the moment an absolutely impenetrable wall of bush or grass. Yet they have seen something in front, or why this order? The leisurely pace at which we proceed gives the imagination ample time to work.

On one occasion I had the opportunity of testing the solidity of the wall at either side. We were trekking at the time through elephant grass, and along a narrow elephant track, when suddenly I discovered, after a halt, that I had left my tobacco behind. There are two things that you may never ask for on a march, and one of them is tobacco. The loss of a nearly full bag of Boer tobacco is a calamity the immensity of which you must be a few hundred miles from the nearest tobacco shop rightly to realise. Immediate return was the only course, and accordingly I abandoned my little mule to a native boy, and plunged into the grass; the path was so narrow that there was no possibility of retreat that way. But in a few moments I found that the grass was equally impossible, it was like fighting with slender steel rods that tripped you up and cut at you from every direction, and made progress not slow but impossible. At last by waiting for favourable openings I managed to wriggle back along the track itself, and in the end found my precious bag unappropriated. It was fortunately lying well concealed behind a tree.

My dug-out is now two feet deeper. Experts agree that the Germans have a machine gun trained on our dug-out, and when the 'hates' do come we get the full benefit. We are so deep down now that only a ricochet could get us, but if the Intelligence has any truth in it they certainly have guns, though they have not fired them yet. Meanwhile we play a complicated game of spelling in the afternoons and Bridge in the evenings, suffering horribly from cramp, especially the long-legged ones.

We are a Headquarters Mess and so we are privileged to a light at night. Everyone else must extinguish all fires and lights of every

description, but Brigade and Regimental Headquarters may, and indeed must, keep a light burning, so as to be found in case of necessity. Even with these two guiding beacons the task of finding one's way about the camp at night is a formidable one, and it is a standing marvel to me how the orderlies manage it. On the few occasions on which I have ventured out I have invariably been lost within the first few minutes. I could write an interesting essay on the subject of being lost. If you camp in the middle of thick bush or grass the result is to form a labyrinth—little encampments connected by narrow passages from which you can see nothing. I spent half an hour once looking for the Doctor who was all the time a few yards from me. On another occasion I was returning at night from the hospital to Headquarters, a distance of only fifty yards or so, and I had taken careful bearings, and there was a guiding road to be crossed. I found at the end of ten minutes that where by every law human and divine Headquarters should have been was a herd of mules. On one occasion I lost the whole regiment and galloped for a mile straight into the German lines. The regiment had turned off the road into the bush, marching in single file, and I had not noticed the very narrow opening by which they had gone.

Rations have not been too plentiful, but the timely discovery of a herd of hippopotamus has tided over the immediate difficulty. The hippo is as easy to shoot as a cow, and if well cooked is difficult to distinguish from beef. We are having stewed hippo for lunch to-day.

At or near Buiko, about half-way down the line, the German army had broken away from the line across country to the south-west, our columns following them and giving them no rest. They had once or twice attempted to make a stand and some sharp scraps had taken place, always with the same result, the Germans after a few hours' fighting retreating, generally under cover of darkness. The country being for the most part covered with thick bush and elephant grass made escape comparatively easy.

This advance and retreat had continued until the line of the Nguru Mountains was reached. These mountains are for the most part of no very great height, but cover a good deal of ground and present a very formidable obstacle to the invader. The road to Morogoro and the Central line pass through the heart of them, and on heights dominating the pass the Germans had taken up a strongly entrenched position. They had further brought up two big 4.1 naval guns salvaged from the *Königsberg*, and also an 88-milli-

metre gun. And here for some five weeks, our advance, which had been practically continuous since the end of the rains, was brought to a standstill, shortage of supplies obliging us to wait till the transport could catch up a little.

The camp in which the bulk of our forces, apart from the cavalry, was contained was a large one, the perimeter extending for about four miles. It was a rather picturesque camp, covering a tangle of hills varying in size from one quite dignified peak to the humblest rise, and many of these hills were covered thinly with trees, like an English orchard. Indeed the whole landscape had a very English look, as was often the case in German East, what we are accustomed to think of as distinctively tropical vegetation being conspicuously absent. It was a green camp, not shady, for the foliage was too thin to give much shade, but distinctly green. It looked straight towards the mountains, and they too were green, of a darker hue, a fresh-looking wall of foliage. But for the fact that these unpleasant big guns were concealed among their forests, the mountain view would have given unalloyed pleasure. As a matter of fact, the only time we viewed the mountains with any satisfaction was when our aeroplanes were dropping bombs on them. Then we knew they would be quiet for a time, otherwise they were liable at any moment of the day or night to emit a distant savage grunt, and then in a second or two, with a whistle and an ear-splitting roar, one or two of their big high-explosive shells would arrive and try to blow somebody or something to pieces. As they had held our camp previous to our arrival they knew the range to a nicety, and they distributed their favours so impartially that, after one or two shells had fallen in your particular lines, you might be pretty sure that you had your dose and that the next would be for someone else. Altogether they put some 700 shells into the camp while we stayed there, and did on the whole extraordinarily little damage. The camp contained a motor-lorry park, several batteries of artillery, a bigish supply depot, and a great many animals, so that, on the whole, we may consider ourselves to have been fortunate. Thank Heaven they had no shrapnel.

One rather humiliating feature in the situation was that to this continual and vexatious bombardment we were unable to make any reply, except when it pleased the aeroplanes to come over and drop a few bombs. None of our guns were of sufficient range to get at the mountain positions, so that when the shelling began we had to scuttle to our holes and lie doggo till it was over; a sad change for our victorious army.

My mess associates, in spite of their exalted rank, were exceedingly pleasant companions, and with the Colonel in particular, once my natural awe had subsided a little, I spent many pleasant hours in reconstructing poems from memory. We managed between us to do a good many of Wordsworth's sonnets, the greater part of the 'Spanish Armada' (I am looking forward to the time when I can fill up the hiatuses), and other masterpieces of literature. The Colonel was, besides, a magnificent raconteur, and enlivened our numerous and compulsory sojourns underground with selections from his extensive repertoire. He was, I believe, the author of the famous—at least it ought to be famous—description of a certain important commercial centre as the 'City of Dreadful Knights.' The intelligent reader will judge from this that our hours in the dungeon were not by any means as dull as they might appear to have been.

The situation was besides not without its milder humours. There was the enthusiastic young R.A.M.C. officer who insisted on holding an inspection of latrines while a particularly furious strafe was in progress. There were the comments of one of the regimental humorists, who from an adjoining dug-out poured forth a stream of satire, not very subtle, perhaps, but refreshing under the circumstances. There were the regimental monkey's unavailing efforts to take cover behind a tent pole. But, on the whole, the rank and file found it worrying; the guns even when they did no damage made a horrid noise, and there was always the humiliating fact that we could make no adequate reply. The aeroplanes only came at intervals of a few days, and there were generally only two or three and they could not drop very many bombs. I am told that the Germans had the most wonderful underground places of refuge to which they could retire, and I don't suppose it did them much harm beyond frightening their Askaris, who were terrified by the birds who laid the explosive eggs. In German West the enemy had been well supplied with aeroplanes, but here they had none at all.

Speculation was of course rife as to how the situation would develop, and plans for storming the position were often discussed. But it was a very strong position indeed, and certainly could not be taken without considerable loss of life. When you have been in camp a certain time it always feels—at least it does to me—as though it were going to last for ever, and it gave me quite a shock when, on waking up one morning, I heard the Colonel giving directions for moving the regiment that day. Shell Camp and the

life there to which we had grown so accustomed suddenly stopped short.

It very soon leaked out that we were not going forward but going back, and the difficulty immediately ahead was that of getting out of the camp. As I have said, there was a river at the back to be crossed, and this river with its bridge was within range of the German guns. Fortunately for us it was a very misty day, and the observation post which the enemy had established on one of the highest points of the mountain range was out of action. This is probably the explanation of our good luck in getting away without a shot being fired. It was very good luck indeed, for the whole brigade moved out with their transport in waggons, each drawn by ten mules, and forming an excellent target. Probably owing to the thickness of the weather the midday strafe was omitted for once, though in the evening it began again as usual. But by that time of course the whole column was well on its way, not a little cheered by the ineffectual barking of Conny in the distance.

This day of leaving Shell Camp was memorable to me for another reason—it was the day on which I was introduced to my dear and faithful friend Mary Abyssinia. Though in the pride of my heart I twice rejected her for nobler equine mounts (she was a mule, by the way, or rather a jennet), I always had to come back to Mary, and she never once failed me. She had only once in her long career of usefulness shown any temper, and that was when the Transport officer to whom she then belonged had touched her with his spurs. That was too much for Mary, conscious as she must have been of the rectitude of her intentions, and she promptly ejected him in front of the whole regiment. She could canter like a rocking-chair and trot quite a comfortable trot, and her walk was the gliding of a billiard ball over a good table. She was beautiful as she was good, a little inclined to embonpoint, but that is an advantage on trek. Everybody loved Mary and envied her owner, as well they might. While horses were falling sick and dying by the dozen, Mary flourished like a green bay tree, which may have been due to her habit of taking refreshment on every possible occasion. In the pauses of climbing the very stiffest mountains, Mary would manage to snatch a snack. She had been a sort of ecclesiastical institution since the transport discarded her, and I inherited her from my predecessor, the Scotch padre. I fear we shall never meet again, as circumstances entirely beyond my control obliged me, after months

of journeying together and many adventures, to leave her behind when we moved to a new scene of operations. There was a great deal of competition as to who should get her, and in the end the prize fell to a young Intelligence officer who promised me to love and cherish her. I miss her sadly and never more so than at the moment of writing, when I am faced by the prospect of a ninety-mile trek over mountains and on my own two feet.

We outspanned at nightfall, still little more than a mile from our starting point, and made ourselves as comfortable as we could by the roadside. We managed to raise one blanket and one waterproof sheet between us, and with our saddles for pillows were fairly snug. It was the first time I had slept on the ground in East Africa, for up till now I had always had my camp bed, and I was greatly exercised in mind at the thought of snakes. A few days before, at Shell Camp, we had had a nocturnal visit from a python, which went crawling over the dug-outs and giving the men a creepy experience. Those that saw it described it as of enormous size, but in the darkness it escaped unharmed. My companion treated my fears in a very frivolous spirit, and to soothe me (I suppose) sang from beneath our common blanket a number of amorous ballads, for besides being a quartermaster and an engineer he was a vocalist of great power and perseverance. I thought it very imprudent, for snakes are notoriously fond of music, and there must have been plenty of them in the ground behind us, and I felt very uneasy, as he went on warbling that he lost his heart in loveland, and other inappropriate sentiments. Still nothing untoward happened, though for a long time after the concert had ceased I lay listening fearfully for the dreaded rustle in the grass, and presently I went to sleep in spite of it.

Snakes had loomed very large in my imagination among the possible drawbacks to war in East Africa, for I have always had an unspeakable horror of the beastly things. In the event, however, I found they gave us little trouble, and I gradually fell into the prevalent fashion of ignoring their existence. I even slept once for a whole week in a banda with the knowledge that there was a snake in the wall of it. We only once caught sight of the creature, and were never able to catch it, but at night we could hear it moving about distinctly. One of our officers claimed to be a snake-charmer, and caused a little sensation on one occasion by coming into the mess holding an enormous cobra by the tail. He was quite indignant with me when I asked him afterwards if he had killed it. He said

nothing would induce him to kill a snake under any circumstances, so that evidently there are points of view on the matter. I killed a snake myself, later on, but as it was a very, very small one I did not boast about it.

In no respect was the contrast between France and East Africa more striking than in the medical department. In France it is as near perfection as human ingenuity can make it. In my own case my wound was dressed and I was given the anti-tetanus injection within ten minutes of being hurt. I was taken to the Clearing Station that evening, and ten days later had been X-rayed and operated on at the Base Hospital. Bad cases were brought down by canal boat without even the jerking of a hospital train. The Base Hospital in my case was at Rouen, and the journey home to England was made by water the whole way, the hospital ships coming down the Seine.

Such perfection was, of course, impossible in East Africa, owing in the first place to the enormous length of the line of communication, and to the fact that it was largely made by motor transports over very bad roads. There were not enough motor ambulances to deal with the numbers of sick and wounded, and the journey had often enough to be made in open lorries exposed to the full glare of the sun. The jolting in a motor ambulance even was bad enough; the sufferings of the men in ordinary lorries were simply terrible. I do not suppose any one was to blame; the armies were moving forward so rapidly, the difficulties of transport were so immense, that it was quite likely impossible to get up the petrol necessary for an adequate fleet of ambulances. The base hospitals were all that such institutions should be, with adequate equipment and staffs of devoted nurses, but, at least at one period of the war, they were a long, long way from the front, so that it was impossible to send really bad cases back, and the clearing stations had, to a large extent, to do their work.

We have supped fairly full of horrors the last year or two, and I have no wish to add to them unnecessarily. But East Africa is a long way from England, and it is only right that the Mother Country should know a little at least of what her sons out here have suffered. All field hospitals after an action are pretty bad, but here we had in addition the heat and the flies and the terrible soldier ants; the place reeked with the stench of dead horses, and the baboons chattered unceasingly from the wood only a few feet

away. And the future held out no hope of a speedy relief, but an endless and agonising journey on stretchers. Miles of wild mountain lay behind and miles in front.

But it was to the Field Ambulances that the most impossible task of all was assigned, the task of keeping in touch with the army in the field and dealing with its casualties and sick. For a considerable portion of the advance the way led across a barren and mountainous district, where no wheeled traffic of any sort could follow, and the ambulance had to leave all its motors behind and all its medical comforts that could not be transported by mules or native carriers. And the road, or rather path, was so bad that even mules had sometimes to be hauled up the hills by ropes. It can be no secret now, I think, that the amount of sickness in the European regiments during the advance was very great; men were dropping out every day and 'waiting for the ambulance,' and when the ambulance came along, all it could do was to persuade them to get up and struggle on, and at intervals to run up temporary hospitals—some sort of roof and shelter against the pitiless sun was all that was possible—and to leave the worst cases there in charge of an N.C.O. until help could be sent or the patients were strong enough to travel again. Quinine and tinned milk were the principal comforts, and the position of these men in 'hospital' was far from luxurious, and indeed sometimes not very safe. I knew one R.A.M.C. officer—also a fellow traveller from England—who had his ambulance rushed by German Askaris, and only saved himself and his sick by getting them into the bush. They had to spend the night there, and the doctor caught fever, and altogether things were in a bad way.

On the night of my arrival at Handini, I was disturbed, soon after turning in, by a loud report. Rumours of Askaris in the neighbourhood had been rife during the day, and I thought at first that something might be going to happen. Nothing did, however, and I went to sleep, and heard next morning that a motor ambulance, on its way to Luki Gura (where the division was), had struck a road mine, and that the driver had been killed. He was brought in, in the course of the day, and buried with full military honours. His had been the third car in the convoy, the first two having passed the mine safely. It is quite extraordinary how much luck there is in the matter of these mines; a whole brigade has been known to pass over one safely, and the mine to be fired by almost the last man. There is really no perfect way of dealing with road mines, for even if you drive a herd of cattle in front of the column, as is

sometimes done, the freakishness of the thing may prevent its going off, while it is next door to impossible to discover when it has been laid on a dusty road. Fortunately, the Germans were not so well provided with mines here as in German West, and fortunately, too, our champion scout caught their champion mine-layer about this time; at least there was a widespread rumour to that effect.

One day I was walking at the head of the column with the C.O. We were all feeling cheerful at the prospect of water and all the blessings it brings with it, and the country, though parched and covered for the most part with grey sapless trees and thorn bushes, was doing its best to look nice, when suddenly our contentment was rudely dispelled by the sound of a loud explosion. We thought at first we were being shelled, and if that were so we were in a bad way, for the road ran under a line of low hills. But almost immediately the word was passed up that our rear-guard had struck a road mine. I went back at once and found a horrible state of things—a hole in the road, two men and a mule horribly mutilated, and several wounded. The doctors were doing their best with one of the wounded men, but the other was beyond their help, and died in my arms a few minutes after I got there. The other died within half an hour, and we buried them both in the same grave. They were two young South African Dutchmen, and I read over them such prayers as I thought we should use in common. . . . We piled up as big a heap of stones as we could make, and the ambulance sergeant fixed a board with their names and numbers, and then we left them in a very lonely place. But some day, I take it, when the Great South Africa of which we dream is a reality, when the union of the races is complete, and the old accursed hatred all forgotten, someone from a greater Union will pass that way, and see and know, as we can but believe and guess, the meaning of that lonely grave among the hills.

R. G.

UNCONQUERED: AN EPISODE OF 1914.¹

BY MAUD DIVER.

CHAPTER XIX.

'So hard it seems that one must bleed
Because another needs will bite!
All round we find cold Nature slight
The feelings of the totter-kneed.'

MEREDITH.

LADY FORSYTH sat in her bedroom window-seat, looking out over the terrace to the restless pine-woods tossed and tumbled by the wind. Masses of grey cloud sagged low above the trees. Here and there patches of fragile blue showed fitfully. Then the sun took courage and flashed a pale smile from between two scurrying clouds. Gradually the sky cleared. The wet flags of the terrace gleamed like polished steel. Drenched and dismal trees stood suddenly transfigured. Every leaf and twig flaunted a diamond.

Closing her eyes a moment she lifted her face to the sun's caress; and the clear light revealed lines that had not been there in August.

She had passed through deep waters, this bereaved woman, who refused to own herself bereaved: and in some ways the past week had seemed the longest, the hardest of all. Yet the flame within still burned on, tremulous, unquenchable.

When she looked down again, two figures had appeared on the terrace: Sheila and Mr. Seldon, moving very slowly deep in talk. The man was tall and thin, with a small, aristocratic head. He could not yet walk without crutches; but, by a miracle of surgery, the leg had been saved. He seemed a homeless creature: parents dead; married sister in India; and Sheila had begged that he might spend part of his convalescence at Wynchcombe Friars.

She was quite frankly interested in his new development. Whether that interest went deeper, Lady Forsyth found it hard to tell; the more so that she felt doubtful how far Sheila had ever let herself go in respect of Mark. That she loved him was certain and natural enough; but the extent and nature of that love was her own most hidden secret, kept under lock and key.

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Lady Forsyth herself had hoped honestly, for Sheila's sake, that the girl's heart was not given irrevocably to Mark. Yet here she was, with her native inconsistency, resenting the least sign that it might have strayed in Seldon's direction. Sheila, it seemed, had complete faith in his remarkable transmutation. Helen privately doubted whether it would outlast the stimulus of the war. She even suspected him of playing up to the girl's new view of him in the hope that so he might win her after all.

Well—Sheila was strong enough and wise enough to work out her own salvation ; but there were moments when Helen was half tempted to wish that Mr. Seldon had stuck to his desert station and his whisky.

By now the fugitive gleam had brought two more figures into the garden : Ralph Melrose, with his left arm in a sling, and Mona's step-brother, young Eldred Laurence—an infant of twenty, who had been through everything from Mons to Ypres. He limped badly and wore a bandage over one eye. Both boys, Helen perceived, had brought back from their great ordeal an engaging modesty and cheerfulness ; a truer perspective of things in general. And they were not rare phenomena. They were average specimens of their kind ; standing proofs of the hard paradox that the 'senseless, devilish, bestial thing' called War had, even in a few months, done more to lift and enlarge the characters of those who waged it, in a right spirit, than a decade of material prosperity and peace.

These three convalescents, and one other, represented Helen's household of the moment. That other was the Rev. George Wilton, Wynchmere's new curate. In an impulse of kindness—since regretted—Helen had succumbed to the importunity of Mrs. Clutterbuck on his behalf. With a battalion temporarily billeted on the little town, there were simply no 'rooms' to be had—none, at least, that suited the Rev. Wilton's fastidious taste. The one hotel was overcrowded with officers. Three subalterns had invaded the Vicarage, and Mrs. Clutterbuck was in a quiver of anxiety over the possible effect upon her two plain daughters of khaki and frivolous conversation for breakfast, lunch and dinner. If 'dear Lady Forsyth' would take pity on Mr. Wilton, it would be an 'act of Christian kindness,' and who knew but she might find herself entertaining an angel unawares !

She had entertained the angel for a week, now, and was only aware of having stumbled on a specimen of sanctified snobbery, who annoyed her to exasperation. Though she numbered among

her friends more than one Scottish minister, the average English curate had a knack of setting all her bristles on end; and Mr. Wilton was the average curate—with aggravations.

Very soon, the brief gleam of sunshine vanished. The strollers vanished also, in search of tea; and as Helen rose to join them, the 'angel unawares' came flapping down the path through the rose-garden, a neatly folded mackintosh and an unrolled umbrella hanging over his left arm.

There had been a partial movement of troops. He had been out to 'try his luck': and in that one respect, at least, she was his fervent well-wisher.

She found them all in the drawing-room, and Sheila making tea.

'Couldn't wait for you, Mums,' she apologised. 'The kettle was having a fit!'

The two subalterns rose at her entrance. But it was Wilton who secured her favourite chair and pushed it a couple of inches nearer the table.

'I hope you didn't have your long wet walk in vain?' she said; and he turned an eloquent eye upon her as he sank back among his cushions.

'I *think* not. But even if I had, I cannot pretend I should have suffered serious disappointment.' His gaze wandered appreciatively round the firelit room. 'It has been such a pleasure—such a privilege . . . Muffins? Sandwiches?'

He proffered them with eager *empressement*; and proceeded to recount, in minutest detail, the happy chance by which he believed he had at last secured the good cooking, the south aspect and the unlimited supply of hot water indispensable to his well-being.

Lady Forsyth, it must be admitted, listened with only one ear. The other was attentively following a discussion between Ralph and Laurence as to the best means of making a sheltered, complacent people 'sit up and begin to take notice of the scrap across the water.'

Laurence was for compulsion; Ralph for a vigorous revival of his Majesty's Opposition; and Helen was a keen advocate of both. Skilfully and politely, she slipped away from the vexed question of curtains and pictures to the more congenial occupation of reconstructing the Government and 'rounding up' the slackers who were 'waiting to be fetched.'

'Nothing short of *that*,' she concluded in her emphatic fashion,

'will disturb their casual conviction that England can beat Germany with one hand tied behind her back.'

It was a subject on which she was apt to wax hot, even a trifle caustic; but never since Wilton's arrival had she spoken with such vehemence as she felt suddenly moved to do by sheer irritation at his womanish fiddle-faddling. For a while he listened in mute amazement. Then, as she paused to empty her cup, he leaned a little towards her.

'But, dear Lady Forsyth,' he asked in his slowest, silkiest tones, 'how, precisely, would you define that somewhat loose term of disparagement, a slacker?'

'A self-regarding, spiritual sluggard,' she answered him, with a straight look. 'Is that precise enough? The slacker—so far as I understand the breed—would *rather* not see England share the fate of Belgium; but would very *much* rather not risk his life or limbs to avert the calamity. At best, he is afflicted with a disease called "humanitarianism," that would have men save their skins at the cost of everything that makes their skins worth saving. At worst, he shirks his obvious duty for the sake of his own peace and comfort.'

'*Eg-zactly*,' Wilton murmured, with a faint gasp of dismay. 'But that sounds . . . *just* a little sweeping; not to say severe.'

Lady Forsyth rose and went over to the fire. Her cheeks were flushed, but her hands and feet were cold.

'Certain sorts of people *require* a dash of severity,' she remarked to the room at large. 'Browning was right. There are some souls "terror must burn the truth into." A good many in these islands—high and low.'

Wilton nervously cleared his throat. 'Ah—Browning,' he struck in, evading the issue. 'A stimulating writer. Rather too rough and obscure for my taste—'

'That's not the point.' She dismissed his taste impatiently. Interruption annoyed her when she was well under way. 'The point is terror burning the truth into people who have a positive genius for shutting their eyes to it—if it's likely to make them uncomfortable. One wonders, will even these unmasked Germans convince our intellectuals that evil, in all its forms, is a deadly reality, to be fought and conquered; not a sort of moral indigestion to be cured with sugar-coated tabloids! Between science and civilisation we've exploded hell and chloroformed the devil. And if we're properly advanced, we can't even commit

sin. We are merely the victims of environment or inherited tendencies. Nothing like the polysyllable steam-roller for flattening out awkward facts! Take the case of the slacker. What does his argument amount to in Saxon English?—"I don't see the force of risking my life for my country." But deck it out in polysyllables, and you can turn it into quite a lofty sentiment. You try, Mr. Wilton, in your next sermon——'

'Hullo, here comes Sheila's scarlet spider.' Ralph's voice from the window-seat broke the thread of her monologue and saved the slightly staggered curate from further discomfiture. 'A wire for one of us.'

Lady Forsyth started. 'Keith!' was her instant thought. 'Ralph, dear, run and get it,' she said. 'Hester's out.'

An odd silence fell till he reappeared. 'For you,' he said, 'and the imp's waiting.'

With a sudden leap of conviction, she tore it open and read: 'Sir Mark Forsyth is alive and wounded but safe. I have letter from France. Posting to-night.'

It was signed by Mark's bootmaker at Winchester. But, at the moment, her brain took in nothing beyond the incredible fact. Mark was there—across the Channel. She could go to him. . . .

'Any answer?' Ralph asked.

She shook her head. Then, suddenly, she looked up, with a strange, uncertain smile. 'Mark is alive—*safe!*' she said, an uncontrollable note of triumph in her low voice.

She saw Sheila rise; heard disjointed sounds from the four men; then a rush of tears blinded her, and she hurried out of the room.

Later on, when Sheila crept quietly into Lady Forsyth's room, she found her sitting over the fire lost in the wonder of it all. Undried tears gleamed on her cheeks and the precious telegram lay unheeded on the floor.

The girl knelt down by her and they clung together in silence. Then, casually, Sheila picked up the telegram. 'I want—to see it written,' she murmured with a sudden stab of recollection. 'But—why Jevons?'

'That's the mystery. And what's wrong with Mark that he didn't write himself? Oh, my dear, what marvels of perversity we are! Here have I kept myself going for weeks by the firm belief that we *must* get him back, and now it's come, I'm a shivering

sceptic. I have almost to pinch myself to make sure it's not a dream.'

But Sheila standing by her was reading the telegram over and over. 'It's no dream,' she said. 'It's—a miracle. I suppose we can't wire to Mr. Macnair or Colonel Munro till you get that letter. But—there's Bel.'

'Yes—there's Bel.' A pause. 'I hope the shock of joy will unfreeze her. She'd better come here, if she can. Get me a form, darling, and see if the men are happy. I'd like to sit here peacefully till dinner—and think about my boy.'

Sheila dropped a kiss on her hair and vanished: not for long.

'Quite happy, are they? *All* of them?' Lady Forsyth asked when the wire had been despatched. 'I'm pricked with faint compunction over the curate man. He roused the devil in me with his hot bath and his art curtains. But I didn't mean to hit quite so hard . . .'

Sheila's eyes twinkled. 'I'm afraid we all loved it! And you needn't be pricked with compunction, dearest. I found him on the drawing-room sofa, quite audibly asleep, with his mouth open!'

'There are *some* souls . . .' Helen confided to the blazing logs—

That evening was the liveliest that the convalescents had experienced at Wynchcombe Friars. After dinner Lady Forsyth played to them for the first time. Music was the one adequate outlet for her pent-up emotion. She chose only triumphal themes and she played them triumphantly. Let her audience understand if they chose.

Seldon, ensconced in an armchair by the fire, listened with rapt attention, his neat profile cut like a cameo on the oak panelling beyond. Sheila sat near him on the fender-stool, absorbed in her own thoughts.

Suddenly, when the music was loudest, he leaned towards her over the arm of his chair.

'Miss Melrose,' he said, in a low voice. 'Do tell me, who is—Bel? Is she a connection? What's her other name?'

Sheila started and looked round.

'Alison,' she said—'Bel Alison. She's engaged—to Sir Mark. Why? D'you know her?'

'I seem to remember the name,' he answered evasively. 'A tall, striking-looking girl?'

'Yes.' His manner pricked Sheila's curiosity; but she did not repeat her question.

'Coming to-morrow, is she?'

'Yes,' Sheila said again; and this time a wild possibility darted through her brain.

Seldon, frowning and biting his lip, still scrutinised the fire. 'Sounds like a girl I met one summer,' he remarked casually. 'Odd if it is the same. And she's to be mistress of all this? She's in luck. Sir Mark, I take it, is a very fine fellow.'

'A very fine fellow,' the girl answered; and for a few minutes Seldon seemed to ponder her statement. Then, with an odd jerk of his head, he abruptly changed the subject.

'A treat to hear playing like that. What with gramophones and things, people won't be bothered nowadays. And she's got such a ripping touch.'

'She's inspired to-night,' Sheila said, glancing towards the slender upright figure in the dull blue teagown designed for her by Mark himself.

Seldon, it was evident, would say no more about Bel. That, in itself, lent colour to the wild possibility that Sheila hoped, for Mark's sake, was too wild to be true. The bare chance of it so troubled her that, long after she had soothed Lady Forsyth into a deep sleep, she lay wide eyed, in her own little room, wondering and dreading and piecing things together; wishing fervently that Seldon had held his tongue.

Well, to-morrow she would see them together; and Bel, ignorant of Seldon's anonymous confidences, would almost certainly give herself away.

CHAPTER XX.

'It is the worst of crimes to feel life so cheap, and make it so expensive for other people.'—MARY A. HAMILTON.

NEXT morning, in spite of her vigil, Sheila appeared earlier than usual in Lady Forsyth's room, to share tea and letters—especially letters. And there failed not the envelope with the Winchester postmark.

The bootmaker—respectfully amazed and delighted—begged to enclose a letter in French whose contents he had learnt from a

Belgian refugee. It was written in Sœur Colette's fine clear hand; and beneath the nun's modest signature a circle of sealing-wax bore the Forsyth crest stamped on it by Mark's signet ring.

At sight of that, the mother's tears started. 'Oh, I'm an idiot. Read it to me, darling,' she said. And Sheila read, in a low steady voice, the plain tale, simple yet astonishing, of Mark's threefold reprieve from death; of the mystery that surrounded him till Sœur Colette—who attributed every detail to the goodness of God and the Holy Virgin—discovered his name and regiment written inside his brogues; of the victorious French Army that returned at last, scattering and annihilating 'les Boches' so that there was scant time for collecting sick prisoners or indeed for anything but a hurried retreat upon stronger positions.

'Possessing no other address,' the writer concluded, 'I venture to report these matters to M. le cordonnier, trusting that they may yet arrive to the relations of Monsieur Sir Forsyth, who is of a courage and patience unsurpassed. If one should come soon and take him to Paris, M. le docteur has great hope that in time he will walk and speak as before.'

Thus Sœur Colette, in her saintly simplicity; and neither of the women who read the letter she had written, with tears and prayers, caught a glimpse of the idyll that had saddened and glorified her life.

'Oh, if I could only pack up and start this instant!' was the cry of Helen's impatient spirit. 'And he, lying paralysed, all these weeks—my poor darling!'

Life was suddenly real again, purposeful, genuinely worth living; and soon after breakfast came a wire from Bel: 'Thanks for splendid news. Arriving Westover 4.15.'

'I'll take the car out and meet her,' Sheila announced with decision.

'Very sweet of you, my lamb.' But Sheila knew that sweetness had nothing whatever to do with it. 'Crown your virtue by giving his Reverence a lift into Wynchmere as you go through. We shall scarcely escape tears at parting! The fleshpots and the title and the joy of casually airing it can be trusted to eclipse all my egregious remarks.'

It seemed she was not far wrong. After lunch Wilton hovered about like a tame rook, murmuring plaintive platitudes, lamenting his inability to put into adequate words . . . and so on and so

forth. But at the last, spurred by inexorable sounds without, he found, in one breath, the adequate word and the courage to speak it.

'*Dear Lady Forsyth,*' he murmured bending over her hand, 'it has been such a privilege—quite a liberal education. So hard to tear oneself away! At lunch I was wishing—forgive the audacity—that I had the good fortune to be your son. Then I need never go away.'

'My son?' She started and changed colour: at that moment it was the last audacity she felt disposed to forgive. 'If you were my son, Mr. Wilton, I should send you straight out to France—where you ought to be now.'

The startled curate drew back as if from a blow. 'But my cloth—my sacred calling—'

She gave him a direct look. 'It may surprise you,' she said, 'but I have looked carefully through the ordering of priests and the thirty-nine articles and I can find there no admonition whatever to abstain from bearing arms in defence of your country. And look at the French priests. Hundreds of them in the ranks; lifting the Church, by their manliness and courage, to a position it has not occupied since the Revolution. I myself know several clergymen, Scottish and English, with the colours. And I am quite *sure* their sacred calling has suffered no stain because they have bayoneted a few Germans and quitted themselves like men. *They* will preach sermons worth hearing, those brave fellows, . . . if they win through. It's men, real men, we need if the Church is to regain her lost hold on us all.'

'*Eg-zactly,*' he agreed, inadvertently, to her huge delight.

'Then—*why* not go out and qualify——?'

'Impossible, dear lady, impossible.' He reddened distressfully, lifting one long hand as if to ward off the devil in person. 'Others, I would not presume to judge. Every man is ultimately responsible to the Inner Light. And *my* conscience would never permit—'

'Well, that settles it,' she interposed briskly, without a touch of flippancy. 'We can't start a full-dress debate on the doorstep! Miss Melrose has a train to meet. I hope the hot water and the cooking and the curtains will leave nothing to be desired. I mean it,' she added, with her kindest smile, and handed him over to Sheila, who had found some difficulty in dispensing with the services of Ralph.

Wilton was abnormally silent all the way to Wynchmere;

and Sheila was absorbed in her driving and her own thoughts. At intervals the pensive curate glanced at her under his eyelids ; appraised her charming profile—a shade too resolute for his taste—and her capable handling of the machine. He had heard there was plenty of money going at Westover Court. All three daughters would be well dowered ; and this one was an open favourite at Wynchcombe Friars. Decidedly, if it came to business, the youngest Miss Melrose would do very well.

The glow of this secret decision made his limp handshake at parting a degree less limp than usual ; but Sheila wore thick driving gloves and was visibly in a hurry to be gone.

At Westover station she annexed Bel—radiant, friendly, and eager for further news.

‘ Sheila—is it stark true ? ’ she asked as they spun along between dripping hedges. ‘ Have you got the mysterious letter ? Who wrote it ? Please tell everything. ’

And Sheila told—keeping her eyes on the wheel.

At the word ‘ paralysis ’ Bel started.

‘ Oh, how horrible ! So disfiguring. I suppose Lady Forsyth will go out to him.—And she believed it all the time. Isn’t she a wonder ? I can’t, even now. Not till I see him and feel him. ’

And she fell silent, thinking her own thoughts.

Sheila had just braced herself to a casual mention of Seldon, when she spoke again.

‘ Any wounded at Wynchcombe Friars just now ? ’

‘ Yes, three of them. Ralph—almost well ; Mona’s brother, Mr. Laurence—such a delightful boy ; and Mr. Seldon, an Indian civilian. Came over as a despatch-rider— ’

‘ Seldon ? From India ? ’ It was enough. Sheila knew that the wild possibility was true. ‘ A thin dark man ? Clever and rather good-looking ? ’

‘ Yes. Have you been in India too ? ’

Sheila looked round now, curious to see if Bel were the least put out by the reappearance of a lover she had cruelly hurt and deceived. On the contrary, she seemed interested and rather amused. ‘ No, I met him on leave in Cornwall, some years ago. Odd he should turn up again here ! ’

‘ Not so very, ’ Sheila said, with her small smile. ‘ You see, he’s a friend of mine. I met him in India and we’ve corresponded ever since. Then he came over to France and I found him one day among the wounded at Boulogne. ’

'Oh, *you* know him too!' Bel's amusement increased visibly. 'D'you like him? I thought him rather a poor specimen.'

'The war has brought out all the best in him,' Sheila remarked. Every moment she grew angrier with this girl; angrier and more determined to get at the truth—in good time. For months she had been sitting down severely on her own deep-seated jealousy and pain; and this final proof of Bel's utter unworthiness, coming at such a moment, seemed to shake the foundations of things.

Not that she consciously sat in judgment. There was nothing of the prig in her composition. But, because her heart was the biggest thing about her, she held peculiarly sacred the hearts of men, that, for Bel and her kind, are so many counters on the gaming tables of life. Small and contained creature though she was, sins of passion or emotion were the sins she could most readily understand and condone. It was Bel's smiling, unassailable selfishness that alienated and enraged her. And Mark, with his fiery, sensitive spirit, at the mercy of such an one for life! The thought of it was almost more than she could bear.

Some women, it appeared, were privileged to go through life sowing pain and reaping adulation; and Sheila, whose creed was acceptance, was still young enough to be badly tripped up, on occasion, by the bewildering injustices of life. Her resolve remained to have the truth out of Bel; but not in the first flush of reprieve from very real suffering, traces of which showed plainly when her face was in repose.

For Bel herself Sheila was simply a rather sweet person who did not count in the least. Nothing counted much, at the moment, except Mark and his unbelievable resurrection. Yet she had no intention of going out with Lady Forsyth. That was not her way. Certain of his coming, she could wait. Meantime her resurgent spirit, hungry for enjoyment, saw possibilities in the Seldon coincidence that might serve to pass the time.

She turned smilingly to the suppressed volcano at her side.

'I say, Sheila, does Mr. Seldon know I'm coming? Does he know . . . about Mark?'

'Yes. We spoke of it last night.'

'Did he say anything about meeting me before?'

'He seemed to remember the name,' Sheila answered casually. It was the truth, if not the whole truth, and she could not resist the chance of administering a flick to Bel's omnivorous vanity.

The flick told. It also goaded Bel into further revelations than she had intended.

'He may remember more than my name when we meet,' she remarked, looking out over the sodden December landscape. 'Not so *very* long ago I was accused of having spoilt his life and broken his heart: a tougher organism than sentimental people care to admit!'

Sheila betrayed no surprise. She would not condescend to feign ignorance. 'You could hardly expect him to parade a broken heart in the circumstances,' was all she said.

Bel laughed. 'Well hit! What a practical person you are. I merely thought he might have told you, as you correspond and are evidently great friends!'

Sheila did not answer. She was skilfully manipulating a sharp turn into the town. Bel watched her in frank admiration.

'How awfully well you drive. Who taught you?'

'Mr. Macnair.'

'Oh! I always feel that man being horribly critical underneath. But you seem to be privileged! Is *he*—another great friend?'

'Yes.'

'Mark, too! You've quite a talent in that line.'

Sheila felt the light scratch under the velvet tone, and turned her clear eyes full on Bel.

'You mean—they don't fall in love with me? Well—sometimes friendship is the higher compliment.'

'Sour grapes!' reflected Bel. Aloud she said sweetly: 'It's a compliment no man has ever paid me yet. And I can do very well with . . . the other thing. Even if it results in only seeming to remember my name.'

That was all for the moment. But it set Sheila thoroughly on edge; nor were matters improved by Bel's behaviour throughout the evening.

Seldon she greeted without a shadow of embarrassment; and Sheila missed no item of the by-play between them. Later on, while ostensibly devoting herself to Lady Forsyth and young Laurence, Bel never for a moment allowed Seldon to be unaware of her. It was a situation that appealed to all the actress in her; and the whole performance was a piece of finished coquetry, perfect of its kind.

As for Seldon, he clung to Sheila with nervous tenacity, as a

man might cling to a talisman against witchcraft; but his eyes and ears and the back of his mind were intent on Bel. Painfully he recalled the Seldon of Indian days; and before the evening was over Sheila had arrived at wondering whether his love and friendship for herself were such mere card-houses that they could tumble to earth at a flicker of Bel's long eyelashes, a careless word from her lips?

The bare supposition was unflattering to say the least. More; it was a shock to her young, ardent faith in human nature. She had seen this man rise—in a measure through love of her—above his lesser self. She had been proud of him and for him. Though he could marry neither of them, he was hers in a very special sense; and Bel had no right to him whatever. But the heart, like the tongue, can no man tame; and Seldon's whole manner to Sheila that evening conveyed the mute attestation: 'I am yours. Yet, if she beckons, I follow in spite of myself.'

Next day came a telegram from Keith bidding Lady Forsyth get a passport to Boulogne, whither he would bring Mark—Authority permitting—in the Forsyth-Macnair ambulance car. And for the time being, all lesser matters were in abeyance.

Bel decided not to go; and Lady Forsyth was too relieved to press the point. Sheila did most of the packing and dropped a few secret, rebellious tears into Mark's valise. It hurt her bitterly that she could not go too and complete the old happy quartet that had seemed linked indissolubly till Bel stepped into the picture. She had a knack of unsettling things whenever she appeared; and that without seeming to lift a finger. In a minor way, she was doing it again, admirably, while Sheila anointed Mark's familiar ties and shirts with her tears.

In little more than an hour, the packing was accomplished; and Lady Forsyth, blind to everything but the one supreme fact, departed on her glad errand, armed with letters and messages of welcome to him who, for five weeks, had been counted dead by all except two brave women in England and the two men who sought him in France.

Harry, in the rôle of chaperon, was to arrive next day; and throughout that evening, Propriety—even in the person of Mrs. Clutterbuck—could have found nothing to cavil at in the behaviour of the five young people left temporarily unshepherded at Wynchcombe Friars.

Only Sheila became increasingly aware of the effect wrought upon Seldon by Bel's veiled coquetry. Beneath his restlessness and his half-defiant flippancy, she discerned the man's inner flutterings, that affected her like the sight of a live butterfly impaled on a pin. She herself was quieter than usual; but under the still surface her anger was rising steadily, and before dinner was over, she knew that she could not sleep to-night till she had spoken her mind to Bel.

Punctually at ten she made a move; and as she bid Seldon good-night, his eyes clung to her face with a pathetic mixture of apology and appeal. It needed only that look to stiffen her resolve; and she felt half afraid of her own inner tumult as she knocked lightly at Bel's door.

She found the girl already half undressed, sitting before her glass in a cream-coloured wrapper, her pale hair falling to her waist. Her face, so framed, looked engagingly young. She was smiling frankly at her own image; and an aftermath of the same smile served as greeting to her unexpected visitor.

'Come for a talk? How nice of you!'

She indicated a chair near the fire; and Sheila, glad of the warmth, set one silver-shod foot on the fender. But she remained standing—a slim grey figure with a knot of turquoise blue at her waist and a blue fillet threaded through the dark cloud of her hair.

So, for the first time, they seriously confronted one another, these two . . .

'I'm not so sure,' said Sheila slowly, 'if you'll think it nice of me when you hear what I have to say.'

Bel's eyes expressed polite inquiry.

'Nothing very formidable, I hope! And, for Heaven's sake, don't be tragic.'

'There's no question of tragedy,' Sheila remarked quietly. 'If you'll *only* leave poor Mr. Seldon alone.'

'Oh, that's it? Hands off your property, in fact?'

'Nothing of the sort.' Sheila's temper flared up. 'Hands off a man who has suffered too much on your account already. Bel—*isn't one splendid lover enough for you?*'

'To possess—certainly,' Bel answered with her invincible good-humour. 'That man Seldon's a mere invertebrate. But he's clever, in his own way, and he amuses me. If you don't want him for yourself, why in the world d'you bother about him?'

'Simply because he's a human being and he's made a plucky fight against things, and—he's my friend.'

'Why not mine too?'

'Friendship is not one of your gifts, Bel. The only kindness you can do him is to let him alone. He mayn't be worth very much. But he is worth something . . . now. Even you'd admit that if you'd seen him, as I did, only last autumn: a wretched cynical man with no heart in his work. Drinking, too, from sheer loneliness and ill-health; and so obviously needing a woman in his life that it was hard to refuse him. In the end—that I mightn't think too badly of him—he told me of that summer in Cornwall. And to think it should have been *you*!'

Something in her tone drew Bel's eyes to her face.

'Well—what harm? I didn't commit murder. I refused him—as you did. That's all.'

'It's *not* all,' Sheila flashed out. 'Bel—don't prevaricate. He . . . he told me everything.'

Bel started, and a faintly hostile gleam showed in her eyes. Then, very deliberately, she combed back a lock that had fallen half over her face.

'May I ask—what "everything" amounted to?'

Sheila moistened her lips. 'Well . . . the way you simply made use of him to secure that other man . . . the married one. Mr. Seldon heard afterwards that you—went away with him. Bel—is it true? Any of it? I *must* know.'

She spoke with unguarded urgency; and Bel turned clear hard eyes upon her. The hostile gleam was no longer faint.

'Why *must* you know what is entirely my own affair? In order to tell Mark and make trouble between us, after all I've just been through? Model of virtue though you are, I believe you'd give your beautiful violet eyes to put Mark out of love with me. But you never will. Men don't easily leave off loving me. Mr. Seldon's a case in point. I understand one side of them. And I understand it thoroughly. Mark's a bit strait-laced about some things. But he's tremendously a man. And he'll love *me*—worthless me—to the end of the chapter, whatever I may have done, or do!'

Sheila—amazed, disgusted, and angrier than ever—had listened without interruption, simply because she could not trust herself to speak. At that moment she hated Bel, as she had never hated any fellow-being; and her white Northern anger would rather have

vented itself in blows than words. But, by this time, she had herself in hand.

'I tell Mark?' she said, on a note of concentrated scorn, ignoring the implication of her motive. 'It's for you to tell him—whatever there is to tell.'

Bel let out a breath of relief. 'Then he'll remain in blessed ignorance. Men don't bore us with a recital of their pre-nuptial peccadilloes. They've too much sense. So why the dickens should we inflict ours on them? I'm a modern woman, Sheila. You're not: for all you're the younger. And Mark himself isn't quite modern enough for my taste. It's my only quarrel with him.'

She had quite recovered her complacency now. Tilting her head, she swept the brush through her long fine hair; and Sheila stood watching her a moment, fascinated unwillingly.

Then with a small sigh she sat down.

'I rather think,' she said slowly, 'that, if this war goes on long enough, it is you up-to-date people who will end in being "out-of-date." But, Bel——' she hesitated. 'Are you admitting that what Mr. Seldon heard was true?'

'Just true enough to be a spiteful lie,' Bel answered enigmatically, discarding her brush and resting her bare arms on the table. 'What *are* you getting at, you determined little person?'

'The truth—if I can. I don't want to be unjust to you.'

'Very scrupulous!'

Bel paused a moment, smiling at her own image. . . . Considering. . . .

She was not given to verbal indiscretions, but she had her reckless impulses, and with Sheila she instinctively knew herself safe; knew also that the truth demanded of her by this gentle, inexorable girl would hurt the more because—for very love of Mark and his mother—Sheila could be trusted to keep it safe locked in her heart. Hidden knowledge of that kind rankles and pricks, as Bel knew from experience; and her own annoying sense of Sheila's finer loyalty and courage made the impulse to hurt and startle her irresistible.

'Well,' she said at length, turning from the glass, just as Sheila had given up hope of hearing more, 'as you evidently won't play the sneak, I don't mind admitting that I had every intention of going off with that other man to Australia. I was at a loose end: in the mood for any escape from humdrum England and sufficiently in love with him to be tempted. It was Harry,

with her awkward genius for rescue-work, who upset the apple-cart. So my "going off" with him amounted to no more than a week-end together at the Lizard——'

'Bel!'

'Don't look so scarified, my dear innocent! Heaps of the smartest girls do that sort of thing;—or rather did, in happier days than these. And properly modern-minded men condoned it. If you're for giving women freedom, you can't tie them by the leg to the conventional moralities; and I wasn't going to take such a big risk without due consideration. So he found rooms in a wee cottage at the Lizard; and we went there—as temporary brother and sister!—to do the considering. He behaved beautifully. I was in the mood for a romantic adventure, and we decided to take the plunge. He wanted a week to fix things up, and Harry happened to be in Cornwall tackling a troublesome "case." So I arranged to go there and join him in London when he wired. It was an exciting time! But somehow, Harry suspected what was up; and as she believes in the freedom of woman, I thought she'd take it reasonably. However, she didn't; and there was the devil to pay. She's no joke when she's roused; and he—the other man—seemed suddenly concerned about his precious children. So the great adventure fizzled out. And Harry, having rescued me, has stuck to me ever since. I suppose some of the fools at Bude heard we'd been to the Lizard and invented the rest. There! That's the extent of my villainy. The whole thing's dead and gone, and you must admit I'd be a prize fool to tell Mark. He'd worry needlessly; and distrust me. Also needlessly. If any man can hold a woman, it's Mark. Of course you think I'm not fit to black his boots. I'm not. I've told him so. But it's me he wants, my dear, *me*—good or bad. But look here: not a word of all this to your "Mums," mind. *She'd* never forgive me.'

'No. Never.' Sheila's cheeks were flushed and her lips set. 'I'm not sure if . . . Mark would either. I simply can't understand——'

'Didn't suppose you would.' Bel smiled sweetly. 'You're too limited. That's the trouble with you good people.'

'*Mark's* not limited. No more is Mums. Oh—and to think—I actually told her, without knowing it, the very day you two were out in the yacht——'

'That day? Really, this approaches the dramatic! But never you give her the key to your story. Promise.'

Sheila sighed. 'I'm not likely to—for her sake; though it isn't easy keeping anything from Mums. We're so close to each other all through.'

'Well, you must manage it somehow,' Bel said with decision. 'And I expect you have your reserves even from her. Have you ever, I wonder, let her know that you're dead in love—with Mark?'

'How *dare* you!' Sheila broke in, low and fiercely, 'when I've tried to do you justice—to be friends——'

She checked herself, rose, and turned her back on Bel, grasping the mantelpiece with her small fine hands.

The girl surveyed her in genuine surprise.

'I'm sorry,' she said good-naturedly. 'One would think I'd accused you of forgery. It's no sin.'

Sheila swung round in an access of impatience. 'This time it's *you* who don't understand! If that sort of thing's not sacred to you, it is to me.'

Bel faintly raised her brows. 'No,' she said, 'I don't understand people who mix up falling in love with religion. To me, it's simply the most thrilling amusement on earth. Still, I'm sorry——'

'You're not!' Sheila retorted, unappeased. 'And I'd like you better if you said so, honestly. I'm sorry I ever came in here at all. Good-night.'

She moved to the door; but, softly and swiftly as a cat, Bel sped after her and took her by the shoulder.

'Sheila, my dear, don't be a high-flown little fool,' she said in her seductive voice that was seldom wasted on a woman.

'Oh, let me alone, I'm tired.' Sheila shook off the detaining hand, only to find it slipped through her arm.

'Come and make it up. Then I'll let you go.'

It was detestable; but Sheila was genuinely tired and too disgusted for further argument. Unresisting and unresponsive, she allowed herself to be drawn back to the fire and gently pulled down into the chair.

'You're such a lovesome morsel of dignity and reserve,' Bel went on, kneeling beside her. 'And now I've drawn you out a little, I can't let you shut up again with a click. Besides, we must be friends . . . after *this*!'

Sheila, who was hardly attending, did not grasp the import of that last remark.

'I'm not altogether depraved, you know.'

'I never said you were.'

'You thought so. But I do try to be decent, up to my lights. Can't help it—can I—if mine are candles and yours are stars? And I admit this beastly war has demoralised me badly. Your Mums talks of it as a "refiner's fire"; but . . . I don't know. That sort of thing doesn't agree with everyone. It may exalt the good; but . . . I rather think it makes the bad worse.'

Sheila nodded. 'It finds us all out. It's burning away the husks of life and forcing us to be our real selves.—My real self, at this moment,' she added lightly, 'is a mere log of weariness. I *must* go now.'

'Very well—go. Good-night, dear.'

Bel put up her face for a kiss, but Sheila was on her feet again. 'Will you leave Mr. Seldon alone?' she said, returning to her original attack.

'I'll try—just to please you! But you can't blame *me* if the man's a mere weather-cock.'

'I do blame you—all along the line,' Sheila answered, with quiet obstinacy; and at last effected her escape.

But for all her weariness sleep was long in coming. Her brain was wide awake and haunted distractingly by visions of Bel: her smiling self-complacency, her graceful, studied poses, her serene assurance—cruelly emphasised—that no revelation of her intrinsic worthlessness would affect her dominion over Mark.

Was that true, Sheila wondered, feeling of a sudden very ignorant and limited—as Bel had said. Would it make no difference to Mark, even if he knew all? Was a man's love so utterly a mixture of infatuation and passion that the soul of a woman counted for next to nothing?

Personally, Sheila did not believe it; but she was too young, too untravelled in the heart's by-ways, to feel secure in that belief. She only saw Mark, her god among men, lured and held by this elf-maiden of a girl, fair without, hollow within. Seldon too—in spite of all he had suffered, in spite of genuine love for herself—seemed powerless to hold his own against Bel. And . . . was it only Bel? Was it only Mark and Seldon? Or was their private tangle simply part of the cruel, primitive essence of things?

Lying there in the dark, Sheila pictured hundreds of Bels dragging down hundreds of Marks and Seldons; and her protective mother-tenderness for the masculine half of creation raged impotently against it all. One heard so much, in these outspoken days,

about men ruining women. Was there not fully as much to be said about women ruining men?

Between sleep and waking her mind dwelt long on this side of a question that touched her so nearly. The mixed emotions of the last few days, and the need to keep them hidden, had put a severe strain on her. And closer contact with Bel seemed to have rubbed the bloom off life—to have shaken her faith in the nature of things.

Her heart, in its loneliness, yearned for the dear comrade-woman—mother, sister and friend in one—who could light up even the dark places of life with the fire of her brave enthusiasm. Soon they would all be together, they three, while she, who was intrinsically one with them, remained out in the cold; and must so remain—as Bel had smilingly assured her—to the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

'... No longer can I cast
A glory round about this head of gold.
Glory she wears, but springing from the mould;
Not like the consecration of the past.

MEREDITH.

It was accomplished. The faith and courage of Helen Forsyth had reaped their due reward, and they three were together at last. But not yet under one roof. The instant Mark emerged from supposed extinction, Authority claimed him; and Helen rebelled a little, inevitably, against cast-iron regulations that withheld her from taking immediate possession of her own.

Meanwhile, she was thankful, on reaching the hospital, to find him in a small room with two other empty beds. Ignoring the chair that had been set for her, she knelt beside him, her face radiating a silent benediction.

Prostrate, paralysed, his reddish hair almost hidden by the cap-like bandage, he lay there smiling his queer, crooked smile, and his lashes were wet with tears. When one or two of them escaped and ran down his cheek, she wiped them away with her handkerchief and, leaning over him, kissed his eyelids.

He frowned as if vexed at his own weakness, but she shook her head.

'We needn't think shame of them,' she said, for her own were falling. 'It's natural. Just the blessed reaction. D'you remember your favourite bit of Blake: "'Damn' braces, 'bless' relaxes'?"'

He smiled and pressed the hand he was clinging to in a fashion that recalled nursery days, when some nightmare had so shaken him that he must hold her to make sure she was really there. And to-day, in this first, incredible hour of reunion, both felt unashamedly the childish need of that reassurance.

As his hand clung to hers, so her eyes clung to his face; and she saw now that he was making a desperate effort to speak.

'No, no. Bad for you, beloved,' she said. 'I understand. Home, the first possible minute. They say, no harm to delay the operation till we get across. It might keep us here weeks; and it's England you want, isn't it, darling? And Bel?'

He nodded, then suddenly releasing her hand, he put his left arm round her, drawing her down to him. . . .

He was still holding her thus when the inexorable knock sounded on the door; and once again Authority thrust a ruthless arm between Helen and her son . . .

For Mark, the mere exigencies of travelling emphasised his own vexatious helplessness; but he was cheered beyond measure by the sight and smell of the sea and the faint salt of it on his lips. For the sea spelt England; and England—Bel; haloed and idealised, by this time, beyond the height of mortal woman.

While he lay on deck, delighting in wind-driven clouds and wind-tossed water, memories crowded upon him; and his spirits rose steadily as the vessel, mysteriously safeguarded, nosed her way toward the cliffs of Home. It was still something of a wonder simply to be back again in the world of men; to see papers, as a matter of course, and to know more or less what was happening in the complex maze of trenches that now cleft France from the Vosges to the sea and changed the whole character of the War. Wounded officers, who had heard his story, came up to congratulate him and stayed to tell their own experiences. It was good to hear them, though conversation was a distractingly one-sided affair; good to see, at last, the white cliffs of Kent, lit by a frail ray of winter sunshine; to glide up alongside the familiar quay with its cheering crowd, and to hear the rough speech of his own people.

His glimpse of Keith and Lady Forsyth was brief but reassuring. Then it was 'See you again in London'; and although his deepest

longing was for Wynchcombe Friars, the spell of the great grey city throned upon its grey river, under a shifting pall of fog, penetrated, as never before, to the deep places of his imagination and his heart.

As they drove away from the station, ragged flakes of snow and sleet were falling, and sharp against a blurred background loomed the stately pile of the Abbey, the House, and Big Ben. It was the one corner of London that Mark genuinely loved. For him, that shadowy mass of architecture possessed something of the sublimity, the aloofness, of a great mountain range; and to-night, above all, it was a vision to lift the heart of one mere Englishman in thankfulness and praise. . . .

His destination was a Nursing Home for officers in Park Lane—a paradise of ordered comfort and spotlessness and peace, where the hum of London's unresting voice sounded scarcely louder than the breaking of waves upon a stony shore. Here his mother reappeared to bid him welcome and good-night. She had found rooms, she told him, in a hotel close by; and—yes, Bel was downstairs waiting for permission to come up.

A quarter of an hour—no longer, the Nurse decreed. And presently she came—a vision supremely satisfying to the eye. Her coat and skirt were only a few shades darker than her hair. On the brim of her beaver hat rested one orange velvet flower; and she wore her amber beads over a yellow blouse. Every detail had been carefully thought out; and the result, as she swiftly perceived, was very much to his taste.

But this new Mark, who in a few short months had plumbed the heights and depths of human experience, craved more from the woman he had been sedulously glorifying than perfect finish of colour and form. And he could neither utter that craving nor appraise her with the sugar-plum compliments she loved. He could only hold out his left hand and smile his crooked smile.

An attempt to speak her name produced such a strange, unnatural sound that she winced, ever so slightly, and the blood mounted to his face.

Pricked with genuine pity and remorse, she swept to him and caught his hand in both her own.

'Darling—darling, don't try,' she said, in her cooing voice of tenderness. 'All in good time. You're a wonder and a miracle to be here at all.'

Then—conquering his sudden painful shyness—he pulled her

nearer; and, as she stooped to kiss him, captured her with his arm. For the moment he asked nothing on earth but the sense of her living presence, the soft surrender of her lips. Ecstasy flowed through him; short-lived, but fiery sweet——

Loosening his hold, he pulled at her hat. She sat back on the low chair facing him, removed the hat, and considered it with critical approval.

'Bought for the occasion!' she explained. 'Rather a gem, isn't it?'

He nodded, smiling, and fingering at her beads; and she, suddenly slipping on to her knees, hid her face against him.

Comforted exceedingly, he caressed her hair, and found courage for a fresh effort to speak. This time he succeeded.

'Beautiful—my Bel,' he said slowly.

She lifted her face and smiled at him; flushed but dry-eyed. 'Yes—your Bel. And you're just going to shake off this horror as soon as possible; so that we can stick to our original date, in spite of the war and its abominations. There—I *must* go. I hear Nurse coming.'

She picked up the precious hat and stood before the over-mantel pinning it on. Then she sighed.

'Oh, *won't* I be thankful when to-morrow's well over! Sleep sound, darling, and I'll hope to see you in the morning.'

She kissed him again and vanished, with a parting wave of her hand. And he lay a long while brooding on the day's events; his body too tired and his brain too full of impressions for coherent thought. This everlasting lying-up seemed to drain all the strength out of a man.

Next morning, before the operation, he had another glimpse of her. Then his mother came, with Sheila—graver, paler, and, in some indefinable fashion, lovelier than he seemed to remember her. But of late her image had been kept well in the background of his brain; and it smote him now the more poignantly, as if in revenge.

His hand closed firmly on hers and kept it imprisoned, while she stood there smiling at him through tears. Yesterday's failure made him shy of attempting her name. His gaze travelled from her face to his mother's and back again; and at last he spoke.

'All my thanks—for Mums,' he said, and with an abrupt movement pressed her fingers to his lips.

Her pale face glowed.

'Mark, don't thank me,' she murmured. 'It was simply . .

we were everything to each other, and it helped us to pull through. Some day when she's not there, I'll tell you just how splendid she was. And I want to hear about the nun who wrote that letter. She must be a jewel. When . . . all this is well over, we must have a real long talk.'

And Mark, more than ever enamoured of her musical voice, felt ridiculously elated at the prospect.

Even this unsatisfactory lop-sided talk was over too soon. The eminent surgeon had arrived, and they must surrender him to the saving mercy of chloroform and the knife. Lady Forsyth's heart failed her badly as she stooped to kiss her son. But seeing the tense set of his lips, she spoke more bravely than she felt.

'We've no reason at all to feel nervous, darling,' she said low in his ear. 'I have Dr. Norton's word for it. He says your condition's excellent, and it ought to be quite plain sailing. Keith is downstairs ; and we shan't leave till everything is well over. God keep you safe—till I see you again !'

Dr. Norton proved no false prophet.

Ten days later a very much revived Mark lay propped up in bed, while his mother sat by him, reading aloud, with emphatic relish, an outspoken article from the *National Review*.

The loyal, universal confidence accorded, in August, to a Government mainly responsible for the failure to save Belgium, was already on the wane. The political leopard, it appeared, could not change his spots even to preserve the British Empire from ruin ; and increasingly the note of criticism replaced the earlier note of confidence. But for Mark, at the moment, no larger anxieties could cloud the joy of regaining his grip on life ; of watching his mother's expressive face as she snapped the thread of a sentence to acclaim here or denounce there ; till he longed for command of speech to lure her into one of their arguments that, for her, were at once an exasperation and a delight.

Words came more readily now ; but still, at times, they played him ludicrous and disconcerting tricks, that were not always matter for mirth. Bel—whose sense of humour was an uncertain quantity—too often winced at them ; and then they covered him with confusion or pricked him to momentary irritation with her. They would pass, he assured her, as the brain reasserted its full control. The fact that it had proved to be slightly torn would retard things a little ; but already he began to move his right

hand, and in time recovery would be complete. They must have patience: that was all.

She proclaimed herself a miracle of patience; but there were days when he suspected her of being faintly bored; when her cheerfully persistent injunction to 'hurry up and get well' had, to his sensitive ear, an almost metallic ring. Work and the war and the strain of real suffering had wrought inner changes of which he became gradually aware. The fine film of hardness, that dismayed Lady Forsyth, had not been altogether dissolved even by those first wonderful days of reunion; and now, when she spoke of painful things, it was fatally apparent to Mark.

He was, in fact, beginning to perceive the woman beneath the glamour; yet the glamour remained, in spite of disillusion. Only when he looked into the future, or was tired and alone, the old distracting doubts assailed him. For purposes of love-making she was inimitable. To that end, she was born. For the larger purposes of wifehood, motherhood, companionship—well, he had chosen her and he must take his chance.

And all the while, he tried not to be aware that he was watching for one face, waiting for the 'real long talk' she had promised him; but she never appeared. The uncertainty grew distracting, and at last he achieved a casual question to his mother; but nervousness made it one of his failures.

'Where is—become—Colette?' was the conundrum that emerged.

'I wrote to her, dear,' Lady Forsyth answered, pleased at his remembering. 'But I haven't heard yet.'

He frowned impatiently. 'D-damn it! I mean—Sheila?'

Then he learnt that her mother had claimed her for work at Westover Court, where a number of half-convalescent nervous cases were in need of massage, and Mrs. Melrose was short of skilled hands.

'Sheila's quite wonderful at it,' Lady Forsyth added. 'A genuine gift. More magnetism than massage, I verily believe.'

Mark smiled at her enthusiasm, but asked no more questions. His belated discovery must not be suffered to get out of hand. . . .

So far, he had been a very saint for patience. But as vigour increased, irritability increased also. In certain moods, the monotony, the dependence, the rubber-tyred routine of the hospital existence irked him to exasperation; and if he were alone with Keith he would let off steam, in an outburst of wholesome profanity.

He did his best not to upset the women ; but when a rare fine day flung panels of sunshine across the carpet and a frolic wind set the blind-tassels tap-tapping on the windows he felt like a caged thing. No garden here, as in France, where at least he could commune with trees and sky : and it was no garden he wanted now. It was the road or the heather underfoot ; the wilds of Hampshire, the rolling hills of his native Argyll ; the sea-salt, heather-fragrant air that, for him, was like no other air on earth. He wanted simply to walk and walk, world without end. . . .

One night he dreamed of a kingly walk among the hills and glens beyond Inverraig—and woke to find he could scarcely shift himself in bed without help. The contrast jarred so painfully that he cursed that delusive dream and decided to ask a few straight questions when Dr. Norton came, if his unruly member would permit.

Norton was a lean tall man, with a humorous grey-green eye and, on occasion, a slightly caustic tongue. He had taken a great liking to this virile, sensitive patient of his ; but even Mark's direct demand failed to entice him from the cautious reserve of his kind.

'My dear Sir Mark,' he said, a gleam of sympathy in his grave eye, 'it's hardly fair to fling leading questions at men whose reputation might not be worth an hour's purchase if they took to scattering plain answers and inaccurate prophecies among their patients ! The damage to your brain was slight considering what it might have been. With that well-seasoned puttee for a first-aid bandage, it's a miracle you didn't die of septic meningitis within a week. The main thing to guard against now is nerve trouble : if you let yourself get worried or uncontrolled. With luck we shall have you out of bed in a week. But it may be more like a month before we can let you out of this.'

'Oh—*damn* !' The 'good old word of sin' seldom failed him at command.

'Quite so !' Norton remarked in his even voice. 'It's beastly having to lie up when you don't feel ill. At the same time——'

'Yes, of course—all those other chaps,' Mark broke in, feeling suddenly very much ashamed of himself. 'Lucky enough getting away—intact. I won't worry. I'll—what's it they say out there ?—carry on !'

But for some reason—whether because of his dream or because of Dr. Norton's guarded statement, that morning marked a point

from which his hopefulness flagged; and the atmosphere about him seemed to suffer some indefinable change that gave Norton's injunction not to worry a slightly satirical tang.

He became too keenly conscious of sympathy in the air; and the more tactfully it was implied, the worse it jarred. More than once he caught his mother gazing at him with a yearning wistfulness that he had either not noticed or not encountered before. She managed to laugh it off, but it haunted him afterwards.

Worse than all, he detected a fine shade of difference in Bel: at times a hint of constraint in her manner that he tried to dismiss as pure fantasy; at times, a passion of affection, very rare with her. There was less of mere lovers' talk between them now; and, in the intervals, a paucity of common interests was revealed. Very often she would read to him; and her visits were growing less regular. Some days she did not come at all.

And Sheila, except for an occasional letter, appeared to have deserted him utterly.

He put up with this state of things for a week, during which time his arm and speech made good progress towards recovery. Then, suddenly, his patience gave out and he decided to tackle Keith, the only one whose bearing had suffered no perceptible change.

Keith had been away for a few days at Montrose, but he was due in town that morning; and he came straight from the station to Mark's bedside.

Mark, seizing his hand, searched his eyes hungrily for knowledge withheld.

Keith looked utterly tired and worn; but Mark, just then, was fiercely intent upon himself and his determination to be rid of half-truths.

'You—you damned lucky devil!' he broke out suddenly. 'Scotland—mountains—the sea! And I lie here—cursing. How much taller—' the word eluded him and gesture failed—'Oh, *you* know. . . yard measure—longer? They won't tell me. Those infernal doctors. I'm—no coward. Let's have the damage straight. My legs. . . rotten, useless. Don't improve.'

Keith shook his head, pain unconcealed in his eyes. Then he sat down by the bed and faced the ordeal thrust upon him.

'The chances are . . . they won't—improve,' he said slowly. 'That's the damage, Mark. Your spine.'

Mark set his teeth hard and was silent. The breath of tragedy

had clean blown out the rushlight of impatience. Keith hoped that Helen would never see him look as he looked then.

'I gather they didn't mend matters . . . in the process of dragging you to that farm,' Keith went on, in his low, contained voice. 'Not their fault, poor fellows. Very bad ground, Macgregor said; and they were wounded and under fire. But the result is—a lesion——'

'Lesion,' Mark repeated, frowning with the effort of thought. 'Medical stuff. In plain English . . . I'm done for . . . physically. That it?'

'That's . . . about it: so far as they can tell at present. But there's just a possibility of gradual improvement. A very slow business at best. And even so, Dr. Norton fears recovery would only be partial.'

'Thanks very much.'

The quiet courtesy of his tone pierced Keith to the heart. He would infinitely sooner have heard Mark swear. The swearing was bound to come, soon or late, and it would be a relief for both.

At present, he merely closed his eyes and lay silent a long, long while, facing naked and unlovely facts with his vivid, forward-looking artist's brain. . . .

Try as he would, he could not believe in it—yet.

And the others—they had known it a week or more. It must have been hell for them; and it explained everything. Most startlingly, it explained—Bel. If she had seemed, on occasion, to weary of an invalid lover, what manner of use would she have for a husband chained to a wheeled chair? Had he, indeed, any shadow of right to hold her—now?

Unable to endure the torment of thought, he opened his eyes. Keith still sat there, one elbow on the bed; his hands across his forehead shutting out the vision of Mark's face.

'Keith, old man,' he said, and Keith looked up with a start. 'Don't you worry. I can—stick it. Others worse off—eh? Half a life—half a loaf——' He struggled to complete the connection; and failing, tried to smile. 'Mother?' he asked sharply, and Keith drew in his lips.

'No thought of herself. Only you!'

Then came the word he hardly dared speak. 'Bel? She knows too?'

'Yes. She knows.'

Another long pause; but he forced himself to go on.

'Keith—can I—? Ought I—? Must I lose everything?'

'That depends—' Keith answered with slow emphasis—'on her. Naturally—she is free, if she chooses. But she has every right to refuse freedom; to wait . . . on the chance. . . . Picture your mother in such a case.'

Mark pictured her, and knew very well that no lover of hers, so placed, would have need to fear the double loss. But Bel—? How imperfectly he knew her, how utterly unsure he was of her even now.

'Why did they keep it from me?' he asked irrelevantly.

'They were afraid for your head, till the three weeks were up.'

'Weeks?—what are weeks?' Mark murmured. 'Look here—they must leave me alone a bit. Tell them. An hour or two. I'll ring.'

'Very well. I will come again, this afternoon.'

Keith held out his hand, and their mutual grasp supplied all racial disabilities.

They left him alone the greater part of that morning; alone with the news that had come down on him like a guillotine snapping his life in two. It struck him, in his first access of bitterness, that the guillotine would have been the more merciful fate.

But the one practical problem of the moment was Bel. It amazed and hurt him to realise how little he could foretell her line of action in this cruel dilemma. Almost, he could see her rising, dramatically, superbly, to the heroic plane. The difficulty was to see her keeping it up. Throughout all her past 'phases' he detected that same incapacity running like a fatal thread. Though it pleased her to pose as a rebel, her instinctive skill lay, rather, in graceful evasion of circumstances that threatened to prove too strong for her. Would she regard a crippled husband as a circumstance that called for graceful evasion? That question she alone could answer. And how and when was he to ask it?

He could not yet write; and, like all strong natures, he inclined to the spoken word if anything unpleasant must be done; but he still felt quite unfit for the strain of a scene that might end disastrously. He would of a certainty be tripped up by egregious verbal lapses that, at such a moment, would be intolerable.

If she came, however, he must see her and take his chance.

But she did not come; and the uncertainty, following on the shock of knowledge, was none too good for his nerves. Dr.

Norton advised a sleeping draught that afternoon and another at night.

These gave him brief and merciful respite from the torment of thought ; but morning brought fresh realisation, fresh perplexity. It also brought a letter from Bel.

He scarcely dared open it. Did she know that he knew ? And was she too great a coward to face his pain ?

Her short note answered neither question.

'DARLING MAN,' she wrote—'This is to tell you that Harry and I must run down to Folkestone for three or four days on account of her work. A big meeting, for one thing ; and she wants me to speak. I'm rather keen about it. Not so sure I haven't found my real vocation at *last* ! I looked in yesterday evening to say good-bye, but Nurse said you were asleep and not on any account to be disturbed. So the kisses must be stored up for a few days. Forgive this hurried scrawl. I'll write again from Folkestone.'

'Always your so loving

'BEL.'

He read that 'hurried scrawl' several times over without arriving at any clear conclusion, except the obvious one that matters must stand over till her return ; unless he could bring himself to write through his mother, an expedient that did not commend itself, except as a last resort.

(To be continued.)

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